

Northside Seed Grant

Northside Food Project Evaluation

Prepared in partnership with:
The Northside Food Project

Prepared by:
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Research Assistant

University of Minnesota
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Northside Food Project Evaluation Project

Research Assistant: Carrie Ann Fathman

Funded by: UMN CURA

Organizational Advisors: Angela Dawson and Bernadette Longo

Date: October 5, 2007

The goal of the project was to evaluate the work that the Northside Food Project (NFP) has done in North Minneapolis communities, and to look to the future of NFP's continued work in the area. The project was funded by the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs. Each interview was conducted with a video camera by Carrie Ann Fathman during the summer of 2007. Each interviewee received an introductory letter and signed a waiver granting permission to the Northside Food Project to record and use the information from the interview. Samples of these are both included in this report. The four major categories that evolved during the research project include: 1) Perceptions of North Minneapolis; 2) Evaluation of the Northside Food Project; 3) Forming a co-op; 4) Forming a board. This report summarizes the questions asked on each topic and then includes quoted material from the interviewees regarding each topic. Interviewees were asked questions about topics that were most relevant to their expertise or most relevant to their connection with the Northside Food Project.

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June 2007

The Northside Food Project invites you to be part of our evaluation project this summer. We are taking some time to reflect on our work in North Minneapolis and to strategize about our next steps as an organization. Our mission is to be a catalyst for resident empowerment for social, economic and nutritional improvement in the community. We are now in our second year as an organization and are ready to reflect on our community outreach programs in North Minneapolis as well create stronger community partnerships.

You have been selected to participate because you have played an important role in our work to date and/or are knowledgeable about the issues that the Northside Food Project is working on. As an evaluation project participant we would like to interview you. We plan to conduct all the interviews in person and record them on video tape, with your permission. The video footage will serve as a record of the interview so that we may reflect and analyze your input, but also will provide an oral history of the Northside Food Project.

We would like to complete all of the interviews by the end of August and summer is already in full swing, so please let us know if you are willing to participate and we will contact you to set up a meeting time and place. Interviews should take no more than an hour and can be conducted anywhere that is convenient for you or at the Northside Food Project's office in North Minneapolis (which has great natural light; good for video recording). Carrie Fathman, a student of Landscape Architecture at UMN will conduct the interviews and will contact you to set up a meeting time. We look forward to hearing from you and appreciate all you have done. Please contact Carrie at (314)495-0602 or fathm002@umn.edu if you are interested in participating. Also feel free to contact Angela Dawson at angela@northsidefoodproject.org or Bernadette Longo at blongo@umn.edu if you have any questions about this process. They are also both available at the Northside Food Project office at (612)276-1528.

Signed,

Carrie Fathman

Research Assistant

Appearance Release

Project: Northside Food Project Evaluation

Location: Northside Food Project

Center for Families, 3333 N. 4th St.

Minneapolis, MN 55412

I hereby authorize the Northside Food Project to record my name and/or child's, likeness and image to use in a photo document project to be displayed in a film about the Northside Food Project and/or in written materials they produce to be distributed. I agree that they materials may be edited and used in whole or part in any media, manner or format now or in the future, for any distribution purpose anywhere in the world. I understand that I have no rights to the project, materials or any other products or benefits derived there from.

I understand that I have the right to enter into this agreement and that my involvement will not conflict with or violate any commitment or understanding with another individual or entity. I agree to hold the Northside Food Project harmless from or against all claims, losses, expenses and liabilities including attorney's fees resulting from inaccuracy or breach of this agreement. I release the Northside Food Project from any and all claims related to the use and production of materials.

This agreement represents the rights of the parties with respect to the subject matter within and shall be fully assigned to Northside Food Project. This agreement shall be governed in accordance with Minnesota law. The parties agree to submit solely and exclusively to the jurisdiction of the state and federal courts of the State of Minnesota to resolve any disputes arising from this agreement.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ Phone Number: (____) ____ - _____

Perceptions of North Minneapolis

Questions asked included:

- Do you live in N. Minneapolis?
- What activities, if any, have you taken part in in North Minneapolis?
- How would you describe life in North Minneapolis?
- What opportunities do you see for the residents of North Minneapolis to take political or social positions of power in the greater city and in the North Minneapolis neighborhoods?
- Please describe a story or an image that comes to mind when you think of North Minneapolis.

Responses included a wide variety of stories and impressions of North Minneapolis. In general, interviewees described North Minneapolis as one of the most neglected parts of Minneapolis in terms of resources, political and social attention. There were both negative and positive stories about the culture and community of North Minneapolis, but most interviewees agreed that North Minneapolis has a unique community culture.

Tom Guettler of Farm in the City:

"I live in Saint Paul. No I have not been involved with North Minneapolis. A little bit with Bethlehem Community Services, but that is this area (South Minneapolis)

My impression is one that I get from the media- on the edge. I will be honest- a neighborhood in transition. I will be honest- mostly it is images of violence. My impression of the Northside is that it is an edgy place to live, that is all I know. I don't know anyone that lives on the north side- I get no other impression.

I wouldn't know if N Minneapolis has its own culture. The strongest image I have is of residents struggling to get control of their community. I see a lot of community concern. A lot of residents trying to get control of their neighborhood- again this is painted by the media."

Gretchen Musicant, City of Minneapolis:

"I live in South Minneapolis. Because I am part of the health dept for the whole city, I work on issues like violence, school based clinics, promoting exercise and good nutrition, sexuality issues. Quite a range.

My impressions of North Minneapolis- I remember when a big deal was made about the coffee house that went in the Urban League building and it was the first and only coffee house in its zip code. And I reflected on the difference between that and where I live in Linden Hills where I have coffee shops and grocery stores- many that I can walk to. That to me stands out as a touch point where I can compare the two communities objectively. And now there is another coffee shop- the Bean Scene.

There really are not the large corporate anchors that you seen in south Minneapolis, the hospitals, Honeywell that can leverage the assets in the community.

On the other hand I think there is a lot of interest in North Minneapolis. How do we work with the community to deal with not only the 3-4 abandoned houses in a given area, but how do we give all the community members a sense that things are turning a corner.

The cluster development is being done by neighborhood organizations... trying to develop new housing- sustainable, visually appealing. I think there are lots of layers of insight and complexity going into the efforts to turn things around on the Northside.

It feels to the extent possible to be hand in hand. I know it is hard when you are living in a chaotic situation. And if your life is chaotic to be involved. (answer to question of is there a distinction between grassroots and municipal level change).

In regards to residents having access to power in Minneapolis. WE have formed a steering committee on youth violence prevention, city wide. We have seen a need for this especially in north Minneapolis. And so the steering committee includes people from orgs on the N-side, like North high school, effected families, survivors, victims. That steering committee is chaired by the mayor.

And We have advisory committees to the health department that are ward based and we are always looking for people to fill those spots. I think that the community organizations are very strong on the north side. I think that is another place that people feel connected to. Jordan, Willard Hayes, Hawthorne...

North MPLS seems to have a different culture than South MPLS. I have observed that people from the Southside, Phillips, Powderhorn don't know anything about the north side. There is quite a sense of differences between the north and south sides.

I think the people that are there have a tenacity. A sense of I am here, I am here on purpose. Not all of them. Many are there for affordable housing or because of circumstance. But many them are staying there because they want to stay there and to see it return to a more well rounded place. That is part of the spirit of the N-side. There are families in chaos. Families that are multi generational in that chaos. And that is something we need to figure out how to break into."

Mustafa of Northpoint:

"I did live on the N. Side up until last year. Now we live in Colombia Heights, just NE. I work over here, my kids go to school over here, so we are very involved in the community here. Food issues are a different kind of issue on the N Side. Food disparities, health disparities, high rates of diabetes and blood pressure. The type of food you are able to access, the types of stores you are able to access. You go through all of N. Minneapolis and you have Cub. That is it. It would be different than the other parts of town, with maybe the exception of the South Side. But they have coops and things. But in some parts they are struggling with some of the same issues. The N. Side is a much larger geographic area than the south side. When you say the N. Side, pretty much everyone has the same issues around access to good food, living wage jobs.

Sometimes you hear so much talk about it, it weighs heavy on the heart. Let's stop talking about it and do something about it! The 1-2 zipcode could really use a coop. the 1-1 zipcode is our immediate zipcode. The 1-2 zipcode has a higher economic base and may be a good place to start out.

Yes, when people say that something happened on the northside, I say that is a big area. The way the N. side is perceived and described is not the way I see it. I grew up in Cleveland, and if you saw the Glenwood neighborhood that I grew up in, you would say this is beautiful. It is wonderful!

I see it different than when I lived here. I didn't go off of Morgan the street I lived on. I went out of N. Minneapolis to go food shopping and everything else. Before Cub there was only Target. To get food you had to go to Brooklyn Center or Golden Valley. After going to those listening sessions, I saw things in a new light. There were so many people that had lived in their neighborhoods for their whole life and were battling for their image, battling for the neighborhood, battling for change. And really going out to start and begin change. It fills the heart to hear them say I grew up here. I got the house down the street from where I grew up. These are the stories that I heard and it is beautiful. I see N. Minneapolis is so much more than it is perceived as. I see it as a very viable area. If you get the right kinds of businesses to invest in it- like the N. Side Food Coop.

Even in several different areas- because the N. Side is huge. You are going to have to have 2-3 different coops just to cover all the N. Side and get all the citizens involved. The concept of a coop draws together community. Those communities have a base. They have community orgs, the people there go to the community meetings, and are active in them. They organize the neighborhood watches, they organize national night out. It is wonderful to see, there is so much potential.

I think a coop is a central piece for food security in this area. But I also think that community gardens would be great. I think there is a lot of potential for folks to grow their own food. I see it a lot in Colombia Heights, it's not that big but they are huge. Why don't we have more community gardens up here? I am sure we consume a lot of produce. I think it would be such a good thing to do together, such a bonding thing to watch something grow from the earth together.

That will stop me when we have done this together, that will stop me from not understanding you or wanting to harm you. It would be a bonding factor. I say let's get it going as soon as we can. Let's do it for spring."

Chris from McKinley Neighborhood:

"I do live in North Minneapolis, in the McKinley Neighborhood, for just over 6 years. I lived at Penn and Broadway in the 90s. I have lived in many parts of the city. I have been hired as the ED of McKinley since Jan of 2007. Prior to that I was on the board for 2.5 years and served as treasurer and chair. Before that I was on the steering committee for the neighborhood and the housing for the neighborhood.

But that is defunct now. We couldn't get enough volunteers. They would try and get information. We had a housing group, a crime and safety group, a youth and family group, and we have got our physical environment group. All of the groups are supposed to report back to the steering committee and then we report to the board. It was for governance reasons. But when you are a really small neighborhood like we are, it can be really hard to do; to maintain volunteers to go to one more or two more meetings. So we finally said that board members had to go to one meeting and report back.

In the city we offer a lot of opportunity for people to get involved. Here in the Twin Cities and even in the states, we have shown that we have very high volunteer rates and a lot of organizational support. But at the same time, I think there are missing links to allow more people to come in through the doorway.

For instance, our neighborhood, if you live in the neighborhood, if you live between the bounds of Lowry ave on the south, Dowling on the north, the river on the east and Dupont on the west. You are part of the org and you can do whatever you want. You can run for the board of directors you can sit on one of the committees. We provide quite a few opportunities, but one reason I was hired was to try and get people involved even more. We are trying to get people more involved in block clubs, to be the leaders of their block clubs. So very vaguely that is something. For us there is the opportunity to learn how civic engagement works. The other part is just about participation, engagement, and people getting to know people. I am trying to get to know people. Neighbors to get to know their fellow neighbors.

We are getting better at that sort of thing as a neighborhood and I think that the city is beginning to recognize that too. But The city can do a lot more to engage its citizens allow for the citizens to participate in the governance of the city. In a less confusing way than currently. A lot of it is the old idea that you have to know somewhere to get somewhere. It is just really confusing- you can be on that advisory board or that task force, but you need to usually know someone to get on there. It is also part about people recognizing that they can do something. And how do you light that spark in someone? I don't know. Encouragement and a chance to participate. I think that is what people need to have that spark lit.

One of the best things to sum up this neighborhood- it is more of a positive, stemming around a negative. It is about block clubs. In North Minneapolis and citywide. Block clubs are connected to the police department. They are meant to be a crime prevention tool, which is cool. The idea is that if you know your neighbors, one; generally speaking you are less isolated. You are less possibly a victim of a crime and it feeds into things from there. But the fact that it is an extension of the police department is a little silly because it is more than that, and it has to be recognized as more than that.

It is as thing that makes our community safer, but people might be more healthy because they might not be cooped up in their house. They might be out, walking the street, walking the dog, meeting their neighbors. So it has health implications. It has physical

and mental. It has crime impacts. It has economic development reasons. If you are more likely to be on the streets and engage with everything, you are more likely to engage with local businesses and go down the street to the coffee shop.

There is one particular block club- 33rd, 32nd and Bryant, and they kind of spread out for a couple of blocks. They organized because of crime. They were in the heart of the tre tre crips territory back 4-5 years ago. The neighbors got together and said this is stupid, let's have a block party. So they came out, they brought the police out, and it has become really more than that. To me it is bad in general that you have ot have a block club to prevent crime. The fact that the city promotes it as a crime prevention tool, if you live in a non-high crime area, do you not need a block club? I think it is much more than that.

Now that one block club they became more than that, but they still use that so they can talk to eachother if they see suspicious neighborhood. That is this neighborhood, that is north side, that is city wide.

I live in the neighborhood, because when we were looking for a house in the late '90s, honestly things were a lot cheaper up here. We were looking in the city, we wanted to stay in the city. We didn't want to live in the suburbs like our friends and relatives.

To live in the city and not have both of our paychecks go to mortgage, which we did not want to do, we were limited. I have friends in South Minneapolis that live in safer homes, honestly, but their mortgage is like double mine. At heart I have been socially active and like the challenge. I am not afraid of crime and other things that are stereotypically north Minneapolis. So we came out, we looked at some houses, we met the neighbors. We really liked the block that we were on. I knew about the challenges of crime- especially the over emphasis of crime issues in the media. We were willing to sacrifice that for living in a diverse, multi-cultural community. In order to fight for it we could make it better.

One of the challenges in living here is partly about fighting in peoples heads and our own heads that you can live here, and thrive, and not fearful all the time. It can be hard to convince yourself and others sometimes. That fortress mentality that a revolves around block clubs can cause people to be shut ins or be fearful of coming out.

And trying to lure family and friends to come to north Minneapolis. Most of my friends are cool with it, but you get that "you live where?". Most people think it is all you know African american, is a really strong, especially in the suburbs. It is funny. How racist is that? That it is built in. it goes back to the late 60s.

At the same time we run into people all the time, like my wife, her boss at work. He grew up in North Minneapolis. And like so many others, white flight. People think that the houses are crumbling, that everyone is poor as hell, that no one is fair skinned up here, and that everyone is criminal. The challenges are amazing, but each challenge is an opportunity.

But if me or my wife or my friends are out there and saying it is not really like that, that is the only way we are going to change that perception, is by being out there. And by inviting people in- like the farmers markets, or Flow, or the Arts Crawl, or Peace across the Northside.

And the media does not do us any favors. Especially the print media- the Star Tribune is awful to North Minneapolis.

The opportunities are boundless, the challenges are many. But there are so many good people that live here. The good outweighs the bad. Gotta go with that. I work for the neighborhood because I live here, and I served on the board. I have no formal training as an executive director. I like doing the volunteer work when I was chair and treasurer. When we were hiring for the position, we could not find anyone. And I said well... I was a manager in corporate America and I said I can leave that. I'd rather do something that I love to do.

If you hire someone that is a good employee, it is not going to matter where they are from. By hiring someone from the community, you will be supporting someone who lives in the community, who knows the community, who has contacts already, who has a reputation. They may know people from outside the boundary of the neighborhood.

If you hire someone from outside the neighborhood, they may bring new skills or connections. Our neighborhood is only about 3000 people and the hiring pool was quite small. We didn't want to limit it to the neighborhood, but we were trying to limit it to North Minneapolis.

It really is a great place to live. There are a lot of good people. Honestly, a lot of the perceptions are correct. The perception that there is a lot of crime is true. But if you do a side by side comparison, of north Minneapolis neighborhoods and south Minneapolis neighborhoods, and match their high crime areas with our high crime areas, the numbers are virtually identical.

Why that when you open a newspaper does it always say north, north? It is a place that needs help because of the institutional racism, the redlining. Name it, and north Minneapolis has had it done to it.

Not only do others think we are not good enough, but we don't think we are good enough. If you beat the dog long enough, then it will walk around with its tail between its legs. We make fun of where we are from. I realize it is a coping mechanism. But why do we not always invest in our own communities. Why don't we figure out how to take the dollars that we have and reinvesting in our community? "

Barb Grossman, UMN Extension:

"I live in St Paul, the Mcalaster area. Some of the work of the extension is based in North Minneapolis. Nutrition education projects and some of the master gardeners.

There is an org, HAMA, that we worked on gardening with last year and will be working with them this year. There is also Urban 4-H at several of the schools.

Nutrition education takes place at probably about 10 or 12 schools on the north side and are focused on introducing youth to some awareness about healthy eating. The classes can range from preparing healthy snacks to hand washing.

I haven't observed any of the extension programs in north Minneapolis. First hand I do not have that info. What I do know is that we have been able to do our work because of the partnerships we have made over the years. Our trusting relationships and our having been there and have delivered on what we said we were going to do. That is probably not different than any other neighborhood.

My very first encounter with north Minneapolis was about 30 yrs ago when I first moved here, I was a vista volunteer. I was working for PPL. We worked on a series of projects on North 11th, or... but I had no idea where I was. But we, there were 6 of us. We tore down a garage. We hacked away at concrete. That was my first impression. That could have been anywhere USA.

Certainly over the years I have been aware of an increasing, or steady numbers of boarded up houses. I have toured parts of the neighborhood. Went on a Don Samuels's peace foundation tour. I was delighted to see some of the private investment along west Broadway. But at the same time, we were told about some of the challenges in trying to sell a house. It was pointed out to us that that was a crack house and that was gang house. That was pointed out to us. I would not have been aware of that on my own.

Over the years, I am aware of many things having been tried- many big initiatives being tried. And things not working out; stores moving out, banks not being able to sustain commitments. It seems like there is always a struggle to sustain things. That leadership in the community is a little elusive. That is under the surface. But it strikes me that there is quite a bit of passion on the north side. Over at north point, people are very committed and very caring about working issues.

I know that I am not quite close enough to qualify the leadership. I know that NERC has been very active. I know that there are artists that have lived in the north side and have moved to the north side and I know that they can make a difference.

In terms of the leadership, this is just an impression, not first hand. There does not seem to be a universally accepted leader on the north side, or a group of them, in the traditional sense of leadership. There are people coming together doing good things, in an exercise of community. I think that sometimes it is hard to know who to talk to, or some persons.

It is hard to get people around the table to agree to, yes this is what should be worked on. But again, I do not live it. This is not first hand.

On image is the history of North Minneapolis as a very vibrant community. This is before my time. As with most cities, there are several strands of immigrants. There are what can be considered hand me down communities. One gets profitable and successful and moves to a different area. There is some richness there. Newer groups have a sense of pride as well. It feels like a contrast to when it was a more prosperous community. There are a few of the original businesses. There is that shoe store. Makes me feel good to see people have held on that long.

When I went to the grand opening of heritage park a few years ago, there was a lot of talk about the rich history of the houses. Here we were in a bunch of brand new houses. But I like that respect for the history. The library, Sumner Library. The fact that the library systems invested in the renovation of that.

If I had a hope for the community,. There would continue to be a feeling of richness of life in the community. A sense of continuity or prosperity. It's not the impression that I have right now. It is a struggle. I think driving down west Broadway, it is not the happiest place to be. There are the bright spots where folks have made a commitment and things are going on there. I am interested in the way that that little business has created its own sense of community leadership."

Maggie Ademek of UMN and the Sugar Project:

"Other local partners; kids cook, as mentioned, if you drive by Loring School you will see a huge beautiful garden with sunflowers, but it is mostly vegetables. The kids have done all of the planting. Then they do food preparation classes and they cook meals for their families. And then they do big fundraisers with all of the food that they have grown. I think they had a cake auction. It is all volunteer run, they are partnering with the school. But they do all the fundraising- and all on a shoestring. One of my concerns is that people are really passionate about it, but they can't sustain it forever. It is really hard. They need long term support in order to keep going. And they have long term dream about being able to change the kitchen that they use to do more. They have some bigger vision things that they would like to undertake. They are limited that they have other jobs and have to run this on the side.

There is another place across the street. It is a wildlife artist that owns it, it is run as a gallery. A new theater company in the neighborhood puts on performances there, called Willow Hawks or Little Box (not clear in the recording). There is some interesting possibilities for theatrical stuff. There seems to be a huge divide between people here that are doing community activism and people in Near North. It is much more low key here. No one has any big visionary things going on. Here at this intersection has completely revived, I have lived here for almost 15 years. Thanks to the coffee shop next door who single handedly recesitated this corner. We have a massage therapist, a neighborhood org, a gallery, this restaurant. It has kind of revived, but it is just these little pockets. Our neighborhood org is just a small neighborhood. I read the minutes, and there is not much going on. They are small and don't have much funding.

There is not much going on in the parks. There is more going on in Folwell Park. But the lack of services that the Northside has is true here just as much as it is in the Near North. It's just that there is not some of the issues that they have, and because of that there are not some of the community programs here. Issues include; gang violence, some of the stuff related to the murder rates that trickle up this way, another thing is the school activism. You rarely read about anyone that is involved this far north, mostly is further south (in the Near North) who are committed and pretty involved. Even with the new project that the U is involved in Near North, you don't hear about anyone up here being involved in that. We lost our grocery store, we lost our library. Our shopping mall, even in Brooklyn Center, 2/3 of the storefronts are empty inside the shopping mall.

IT is really an economically depressed area, not as much. It is holding its own. WE don't have the same number of foreclosures. You drive down Broadway and there are way more shuttered store fronts. Here we have more active corner nodes. There is that, but there is not the visionary work. WE could use an infusion. Food would be a great issue to do that. It would be great to do a farmers market in the old Kowalski's parking lot. Even our community education, we have this little thin pamphlet compared to the rest of the city.

That is the trick- a lot of the food activism is white sustainable ag, liberal. And I know they are interested in partnering, but I don't know if they have the capacity. I don't know what kind of work they have done. I haven't done a lot work on the Near North. I know who a lot of the key players are just because I am person that pays attention, because I live in this community. I haven't really been involved so I don't know people personally.

Just getting more partnerships between what is happening down there and up here. There is this support base of people that I think would be really pleased to be involved. I think the divide is the cemetery. It blocks everything off. It filters out for better or for worse. It is a buffer in all sorts of ways.

This avenue here, Penn is a dividing line. You see these 500 thousand dollar houses. You drive 10 blocks that way and you see people who are really low income. It is all single family. But then as you go toward the freeway, you get one pocket of higher income and then more and more duplexes and multi-family units. There is higher turnover there- there were several shootings. One last summer who was 15 who was shot for his jersey in Lyndale North. And there was a convenience store clerk who was shot. There is a lot more action down there, on Lyndale North. This pocket here is a quieter."

Kirsten Saylor of Gardenworks:

"I do not live in N Minneapolis, and I am not involved in any activities there historically. But my program is increasingly involved there. Historically I have not. Camden, Harrison, I could show you a map of the gardens. Here is my caveat. While I was born and raised in Minneapolis, the divide between North and South is pretty strong. And it has only been since my program that I am going up there. But it is not my position to be fostering those relationships, that is Ila's job. She is really the person on the street. My grasp of neighborhoods is not good. I could tell you roundabouts.

Well growing up North side was not a place for white people. I'm not even saying that all of south Minneapolis is for white people. If you hear police reports about anything going on up north, its horrible, but you think that is up north. And so it doesn't register. That I think it is a very tough life. Something that struck me as I got older is how little green space there is. And strikes me as a place that I just wouldn't want to live. I depend on the green. We are just blessed with the lakes down south. Partly I am sure that this leads to the dichotomy between north and south. People are gonna wanna be around the lakes. People with some affluence are gonna find themselves around the lakes.

So I think that has part to do with it. I see concrete when I think of an image. Strongest experience. Is how cool it is becoming. My kid went to Lucy Laney for school and that was cool. The thing that struck me was how many people from south Minneapolis went there. Sharon Miller. There are a lot of gems and recently I am struck by how it is coming together. With art and gardening, I feel like some of the most innovative things and celebration of art and community gardening are coming from the north. Well so I think Kids Cook is a very creative. It is a garden program for youth. It runs throughout the year.

It's kind of a volunteer effort. I am not sure if it spun off as a 501c3. From Robin Crosby and her sister Starla. The northside garden club is somehow involved. But this is where it gets embarrassing, because I

The neighborhood has really come around. They want to start another community garden and they want to do some other stuff. So Illa, is a total south Minneapolis person too, she is in Powderhorn. But she is still like the North is really coming around.

Kids cook does cooking class with the stuff that they grow. Cityview has had its issues because it was started by someone that didn't have the time to follow through with it. And then someone else came in, so it didn't really have a good start. Doesn't feel as solid. But I think it is getting

Kids cook may not be solid, but they give the impression that it is. Beverly the manager from Cityview came by our tool donation, or tool swap. It was a donation day, which was really good. One of our goals is for the south to meet the north and the north to meet the south. It is meant to be metro wide. It is sort of divided east and west because the politics are so different on either side of the river. It is a very political thing that we do. There is always going to be a little of st paul is st paul and Minneapolis is Minneapolis. But we can try to help and bridge the river. It's really about connecting people."

Deanna Cummings on N Minny:

"Most of my involvement in N. Minneapolis is through Juxta, not just with Juxta, but through. For example, I am involved with West Broadway Area and Business Coalition, I was on the board of the Jordan Area Community Council. I stay in pretty good contact with our council people on the N. Side. I stay in pretty good touch with the Peace Foundation, Northway Community Trust, as well as our N. Side community partners like

Asian Access Media. Northside Arts Collective. Other ways that I am involved in N. Minneapolis in addition to Juxta is that my kids go to sports program on N. Side parks from time to time.

They have played soccer at Farview Park, they have taken dance classes at Farview. We go to Theodore Worth park, that is a good park. That is a good park- for sledding mostly in the Winter. We shop at Cub Foods on West Broadway.

The thing that comes to me when you ask me to describe life in N. Minneapolis is hard. I want to have something different that I think of, but the reality is that's what I think of. Two quick stories: I always have felt like Juxta is known somewhat and pretty well seen in a positive light, both by institutional folks as well as residents. I always thought we were immune to some of the issues with violence and crime that people think of when they think of N. Minneapolis.

In the past two weeks there have been two incidents. Obviously Juxta was broken into like 7 or 8 months ago. We took it in stride. We are insured, and we had to pay our deductible. We were reimbursed and took it in stride. Two weeks ago though Roger rode his bike down to a meeting on Broadway and left his bike on a porch- of Madame Sara's. I don't know if you've seen that place. She is like a palm reader. She is a futurist. He was meeting with her about a potential mural on her building. He came out about 15 minutes later and his bike was gone.

He called me and I was on the way to a meeting in a car. He called me and said I need the car, someone just took my bike. I bring the car back, he walks up to the car and he has a big stick. I don't really ask any questions. I go to Juxta and then to my meeting. I call him like an hour or so later, so I can find out what happened. I was pretty confident that he was going to get his bike back, because I know him. And I was pretty sure that he wasn't gonna rest until he found it. He drove around in the neighborhood and then spotted the guy that had taken his bike. He was riding around the neighborhood with a bunch of t-shirts hanging from the handle bars like he was selling them.

Maybe he had stolen them from somewhere and was on a crime spree. He was early 20s something, and big. Bigger and younger than Roger. Roger followed him in the car for a few blocks. His impulse was to run him over because he was mad, but he didn't. The person pulled up to the house where there were about 4-5 other 20 something guys on the porch. Just by chance there was a police officer sitting in a car across the street on patrol. Roger went up to him and said that guy took my bike, and in fact he said he pushed me off my bike. He said that because he didn't want there to be a debate.

So Roger and the officer approach the house together, and the officer says to the young man that just took Roger's bike- did you take his bike? What happened, you just knocked him off it? The guy denied it and said he just got it from a crack head for \$20. Roger said yes you did steal my bike. And he took the bike, put it in the car and drove off. He doesn't know what happened. Which I think is brilliant. NO one got hurt. SO

maybe the guy got taken downtown, but Roger wasn't there to press charges. So Roger and I were both pretty angry about that.

A couple of days later I was at Juxta and had to get a set of keys made at the lock shop. And at the apartment two houses down from Juxta, there are 3 or 4 guys standing out front, one with a pit bull. And a car pulls up on 22nd, what ever that street is parallel to Broadway. A car pulls up, stops at the stop sign and points a gun out the window and fires three shots. Now I am walking down the street. Now I am out there, an older Juxta student was out there smoking by the trash bins by the alley. He was right there. There is another couple, Dean Rose that owns the Bean Scene and a woman with him getting out of their car in front of Juxta. And there is someone firing gunshots right there at like 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

So I am terrified, so I decide not to get the keys made and I go back in the building and I say what is Shongo had been with me, he is taking an aerosol class at Juxta this summer. What if anything had been different. What if I had been one minute slower. But the bad part about it is about an hour later I am going to my car and the two guys standing on the stoop were still there. And the one guy was saying to the other guy- 15 feet away and he missed. 15 feet away and I am still here. I say and He was only 15 feet away from me too. I was only two feet away from you. And you are proud that someone was firing shots in our neighborhood when there is a youth organization only 10 feet down the block.

And you are proud that people are driving down the street shooting at you and could potentially hit an innocent bystander? Ahhh- people get shot all the time, he says. People shoot, that is just the way it goes. And I said, that is really messed up. I don't have the expectation that I am going to be shot when I come to work. And I really hope that they have better aim next time. Whatever he said.....

Those two stories illustrate the hard edge that is a reality for many people in N. Minneapolis. That this young person is not very phased that someone is shooting at him. He is still standing there. He also doesn't care that someone else was in the line of fire that was happening between someone and him. And that someone who took the bike can think that it is ok and that that is just the way it is. I think that a lot of people don't see possibility, or potential or anything to reach for.

That being said, I don't take those two stories to be the all of North Minneapolis. We are not the only people doing good work. There are a lot of people that live and work on the Northside. I think the culture is different than a lot of other communities. Primarily because of the concentration of poverty that you don't find in other parts of town. You find pockets in St Paul and over south. But the mass density of people living in poverty or growing up in single parent families, or in two parent families with people that are struggling, working many jobs, etc. I think that that tends to shape the community. And then you have a large percentage of the community that has contact with the criminal justice system, when you have most people when they are able leave the community. I

don't know the stats for sure, but I would guess that a large percentage of the people live in the community because it is their last resort, or first resort, however you look at it.

And when they are financially in a position to afford to live somewhere else, they leave. So you end up with folks that end up in the community where they have no where else to go. There is no sense of pride in sort of I have a choice, because this is where I feel connected, I feel happy with my home and my neighbors. As soon as I get a chance, I am out of here. For many of those reasons, the mentality of the day to day is very different. And you also have a lot of kids.

There are a lot of youth programs, but I don't think there is the infrastructure in place so that young people are valued and supported in their healthy development into adulthood, in so many kinds of ways, especially in a community with the issues that I have already spoken of. There are programs, but there are none on Fridays, or on the weekends, or in the evenings. There are gaps that are not filled. Then the commercial and business owners. The folks that create the economic base on the N. Side don't value young people. All of the systems that are in place, I don't think are there: shopping, parks. There are few parks.

I think there are many categories of leadership. I think that there is government leadership- elected officials and the city government, that both have quite a big voice in shaping the future of the community, the present, and also a big voice in what the community will be or is becoming. Then you have the heads of non-profit orgs. Maybe they are different than other parts of the city in that way because the heads of the large non-profits are very influential and have a place at the table in shaping the future needs of the community.

So the heads of groups like NorthPoint, the Urban League, Northway Community Trust, those folks. Then you have your neighborhood organization leadership. Jordan, Hawthorne.... Those orgs tend to be made up of home owners and business owners. Those orgs tend to only represent like 10-20% of the neighborhoods because the majority of the N. Side are renters.

Another category is the old guard. Those are the people that you see on the news that are speaking on behalf of the community- the Spike Mosses. The folks of that generation. They tend to be 50 or 60 and have been active since the 60s and 70s. That level of leadership has not changed in the past 30 or 40 years. Where I see the gap in leadership is residents- who are renters that are not plugged into the mainstream leadership positions. Then people about my age, mid to late 30s, who are working at a grassroots level, engaging with residents, but have not been passed the leadership baton, or whatever happens when someone becomes a leader.

So I am really interested in that dynamic and how things are shifting or going to shift, and how those people who really are very recognized will get to the table. In terms of leadership, my hopes obviously because of the work I do, I think the arts have the potential to be a great change making tool, be a great catalyst and help solve the

problems. One solution, and the arts are only one. And there are other that are working at the same time; health, food, crime and safety, education. But my generation, people my age and Angela's age, have to just step up and take it, and communicate with folks about what we believe and what we value, and how we want to see things and go after it and make it happen.

The way I have seen it is that in order to be a leader of your community that is affecting broad change, there is some kind of official thing that happens. I don't know what that would be. Somehow, you are an official. But I don't think that is the case. I think it is more that you work. Like that saying "be the change you want to see". Juxta is more often being invited to the table with city leaders and neighborhood organizations. And being asked to be involved in areas that are not traditionally thought of as areas of impact to the arts. What we have to do I think is bring other people of like minds, of a younger generation, with us. Otherwise, you are at these tables alone and it can be kind of isolating. Bring other people with you that are of like minds, and getting to sing a sort of like song. And that is the way to change.

The other thing is, for this whole world, in the sad state we find ourselves in. I think we need to rethink what leadership means, how governments represent people, basically everything. I think all bets are off, and people should feel free to reinvent everything. Because most of them are not working for the good of the earth, and for people and the creatures. And it feels like someone else is waiting for that person to change, but really again it is up to us. Each of us individually, that then creates this collective thing. Through my work at Juxta and through B Girl B. B Girl is not changing the world, well it is in small ways. But it is not improving the environment. It was an idea of 5 women 4 years ago. And now 10s of thousands of people support it. And people say it is the best conference ever."

Kim Boyce of UMN Extension:

"I currently live about 2 blocks out of N. Minneapolis, but I did live in N. Minneapolis for about 10 years. I am not affiliated in a lot of community activism, but it is part of the county that I serve. I was elected to the Hennepin County Soil and Water Board in 2004. And so my position- we are elected on a county wide basis, but my district is Robinsdale, Crystal and the north half of Minneapolis. So that is one formal capacity. And I travel in my commute is through there a couple times a day. I shop at the Cub foods and so forth.

My position is a 4 year term, plus I worked for the extension services for a number of years. What I know about working in the community, things change quickly. The actors change. And my context gets old quickly as things change. Much of community work is very relational. You have to keep current. I keep current by reading local papers, like for Crystal and Robinsdale. And by connecting with people. For instance there is a small art gallery just off of Plymouth Ave, called Homewood Studio. Bev Roberts and her husband George, are the owners of it. Bev was on the board of the extension committee when I was on it. And we got to know each other very well, we only live a mile apart.

So I stop there once a month when I see it is open. Tuesday night they were setting up an exhibit of Hmong artists. It's not as if we are working on a project together. But it is keeping the connection. Sometimes you find out about things going on, but sometimes it is just about keeping the connection going.

Currently I live in Robinsdale, which is a first ring suburb, and my wife and I have lived there for 20 years. We are probably the oldest family on the block because it turns over quite a bit. And prior to that my wife and I had lived in the Victory neighborhood for about 10 years. It was the first house we ever bought. We got married and lived in an apartment in Golden Valley for about a year and then bought this fixer upper in the Victory neighborhood. Both of my kids were born in that house. And eventually we outgrew the house. But we liked that part of the city- it has a lot of good stuff to offer.

The biggest word that comes to mind is transition. It is transition from community that once had families that had lived there for a long time. I think there is a lot of transition in terms of race, ethnicity, culture. People's connection to or investment in the neighborhood. There are some exciting things that are going on- there is a new, what I am assuming is a new apartment building on W. Broadway that might have been a Mitus Muffler shop. There was just 3-4 houses that had been there before. You see these blocks of transition, and you go 2 blocks away, and see a whole other thing. I had to get a specialized piece of metal and went down 26th, where I hadn't been in a while. And the number of boarded up apartment buildings and houses that were looking difficult was sad to see. That is why transition comes to mind, there are these new things, like the CVS store on Broadway and 26th and then you go three blocks away and you see this apartment building that is all boarded up.

I think that is the difficult thing about N. Minneapolis right now. How do you handle that transition from a community that people want to live in and feel safe and have access to food and shopping. Yet, it can feel like a very unsafe place. I live in a place where I hear the gun shots at night. I am not talking fire crackers. It is the middle of January and I am walking the dog and I hear the boom boom in the distance, and that is sad.

What is sad to me, when we fixed up our house, what we loved about it is the oak woodwork and built in 1915. And it kills me because when I drive down the street and see those boarded up houses, I know there is probably a built in oak hutch in one. And the quality of work is just great. And that is housing that in particular should be saved and preserved and cherished and enjoyed. That is the kind of stuff that I mourn when I see boarded up windows. And then that sets the ground for copper stripping that happens to neglected houses. And I really like the way Minneapolis is laid out. It is a nice logical city with its numerics and numbers.

I don't know if I would consider myself a leader in the community, I am engaged. I don't know that N. Minneapolis is different than any other part of the city in that the way people become leaders is to show up and be engaged and get active, and be constructive. And my observations of N. Minneapolis, are that 5-6% of the people are engaged. It is the George and Bev Roberts, it is Gary Cunningham at North point, it is the Clarence

Hightower. There are people that have invested their minds and hearts and careers into it. There is this base of people. There are other people who come in and go. But I would say 70% of the people that live there are not engaged in community boards or other things. But I don't know that things are different in Golden valley or parts of St. Paul. You are always going to find a lot of people that are not engaged, and some people who are very engaged.

The opening for folks is knowing that if you show up, there are lots of opportunities. The Soil and Water Board that I mentioned. I filed because I knew it had been a rough few years. And I know that no one had filed for that District. And I don't want to have this be a write in kind of thing, because firstly that is very costly for the county to start going through every ballot and read what names got written in. I thought, I know something about soil and water, not technical, but the organization itself. But no one else filed for it. I would hope that 5-6 people would file for that position. There is no technical skill needed, it is just about showing up and participating; learning somethings about all kinds of projects and timeshare. You don't need to be a landscape design specialist, you don't need to be a biologist, you just need to have some common sense.

I think there are a lot of those opportunities; on local boards and commissions, on non-profit boards. I worked for 12 years for the Minneapolis YMCA before I came to the Extension. There is a YMCA branch right in the middle of N. Minneapolis on Broadway and I am sure there are plenty of opportunities to serve on the board of that YMCA. There are all kinds of ways that people can get engaged. There are some things that are very grassroots- having to do with youth violence, especially related to the n. Side. Like activating the MAD DADs to intervene and tell kids that you don't have to have guns and to try and get it to be a community that is not as violent. You don't have to worry being out or have your kids being out. It is a group of men who have said enough of the violence. I think that is an example of grassroots efforts.

Culturally, I think transition applies to N. Minneapolis. There is lots of culture there, but I think the Af Am culture has been a great force. I think a lot of great things have happened as a result of that. I drive on W. Broadway and see places like the Seed Academy and other community gathering spaces. I see places springing up because people in the local community were invested in it. But the culture is broad. The example is Homewood Studios. You have two Anglo owners who bring in artists of a real mix of cultures. That is probably a more accurate picture of what is happening in N. Minneapolis. I think the Hmong community has a big influence. I really saw that at the Extension when our office was on Glenwood Ave. Then there were a couple of large Hmong service agencies there.

And then there is the Farmers Market. I think that is such a mix of people. The one under the bridge at Lyndale and Glenwood. So there is another example of culture. There is other stuff- there are artists. The American Variety theater that Extension had been involved with. Part of the Capris theater. Those would be examples of culture. The Juneteenth Party at Worth Park every year.

I think the greatest challenge. Like I said I live in Robbinsdale. My kids went to school in Plymouth. I think that people think when they get east of Hwy 100, that you get into an area that is a little more dangerous. I think that kinds of perception, real or not, ends up effecting people's attitudes about N. Minneapolis. We are on the dangerous side. We choose to live there, but I don't feel it is dangerous. Like I said, when I hear shots I feel like that is very sad. We live close to North Memorial and they deal with a lot of the trauma from the violence in North Minneapolis. And that I think is the greater danger- the young person with a weapon. The gang on gang violence that ends up spilling over onto other people. That is really what I wish would change.

Housing, quality of life... N. Minneapolis would benefit from more retail. CVS moved in, Cub moved into the old Target. If you live in N. Minneapolis you have to travel quite a way to get some of the retail choices that other people enjoy pretty close by. Food choices- that farmers market- you can get fresh produce at a decent price in the warm months of the year. I think access to fresh nutritious food is a challenge because you have Cub foods on Broadway and Lyndale. Then you have Rainbow in Robbinsdale. I know a lot of people who just go up West Broadway and shop there. I know there are the local markets- like Snow Foods, but even a lot of those have closed.

The curious thing for me is that when you go south on Hwy 55 or along Glenwood, you have no food related services. You have Hilda's for lunch and dinner. But in terms of buying groceries, you have the corner markets. But for the people that live in Lynmar and Bryn Marr, you don't have a lot. And I think of that whole Heritage Park, and it is obviously well lived in. I come over to the U at like 6 am, and I see all the cars parked on the street. And there isn't a major food store, except for Cub, which is a mile away.

You have a lot of the local shops on Broadway. There is nothing along 55 until you get to Golden Valley. There is nothing on Glenwood. If someone wants to buy a dress shirt, they have to go all the way down town or up to Robbinsdale. There is no local store, little store, that would have the choices that I want. ”

Kevin at CDS:

“I live in White Bear Lake. I could probably count on two hand the number of times I have socialized there with friends. I drive through on 94 on my way to St Cloud, and that is about it.

All of my imagery is shaped by my perception of stories that appear in the media. One of my formers colleagues that worked here lived in N. Minneapolis. He would tell us what was going on in his neighborhood. The image that I get is diversity- racial and economic. But overall a preponderance of low social assets, low social cohesion, crime. When the news says there has been a shooting in Minneapolis, N. Minneapolis is my first guess and Phillips is my second. I shade that a little because especially as you go farther north you have some economic diversity. You have some nicer neighborhoods further north. I don't hear about those folks. As you get out toward Golden Valley and Robbinsdale, you get nicer places. In general, I see it as a place that needs a lot of work and that people need to invest in order to make it a place they want to live.”

Elizabeth Archer of the Wedge Coop:

"I do not live in North Minneapolis. I am not affiliated with any activities in North Minneapolis. My husband does have a base for his job up there. He is a metro-mobility driver. It's kind of on the edge.

My impressions are vague of North Minneapolis and mostly formed by the news. A few coworkers have houses up there because they can afford them. They describe their neighborhood as sort of a closed camp and a lot of people have given up. Someone said that a block club leader was annoyed anyone new moved in on the block. That is just one block. But the impression is that it is really hard to get anything going up there.

That police don't respond very quickly and that you are always paddling up stream to get anything done., even at a block level. Otherwise it is just from the news. I do have a friend that was up there in an old Catholic, Irish or Italian neighborhood. I do have some friends that lived in that area near Olson Memorial Highway. But as their family grew, there was this sense that oops, we gotta get out of here. They described a very strong feeling to get out before the kids started school. Not good.

Images that come to mind- I used to have to go up North to drop off articles for our newsletter to our artist, who lived there. The first thing I noticed, given I am in the grocery store business, is that there are no grocery stores. Once I overshot and kept driving for 2 or 3 miles and noticed that there still weren't any stores. She even mentioned once how far she had to drive to get to a grocery store- Golden Valley or I don't know where.

I have a friend that is a librarian for the NE library. That is a different area with different challenges. But I think she worked at the North Library some; she was a floating librarian. She describes it as being a place that needs a lot of organization and a lot of troubled kids. The kids would come in there to feel safe.

I grew up in South Minneapolis, first in Richfield. Until St. Anthony Main opened and they started some River redevelopment, we never crossed the river. Sometimes to Nye's Pollanase, I never went there- is there anything north of downtown?

I live in Nokomis east. South of the creek. There is still people there that don't lock their doors- I think they are familiar. I always lock them when I am home- I got that fear from my mother."

Debbie Nelson, Cleveland Neighborhood Association:

"I have lived in the Victory neighborhood for 13 years, but North Minneapolis my entire life. I have lived in Webber Camden, and I have lived in Jordan. And when I was born we lived in the Near North where Heritage Park is now being built, until I was three.

I have been organizing here for 11 years, part time until 5 years ago and full time since then. How is it different here? More blue collar labor than south Minneapolis. Much

more like Northeast in that we have a wide variety of ethnic groups here. But I think we are more the working class of the city. While down south where the lakes are, I think the entrepreneurial class has gone there. You can even see on the river- that north of the city the river is a working river and south of the city it is a recreational and environmental river. You can see that and that is how we became the working side of the city- we lived here because that is where the work was. That is the image we have always had and I think that is why we have always been considered the “poor sister” part of the city.

I think that North Minneapolis has a strong sense of community in certain areas. We have also been pitting our selves against each other for scarce resources. There is a bigger sense of community now with each neighborhood having their own organization and then reaching across boundaries to work together. I think there is a very good sense of community. I know that living here all my life there are a lot of people that have always lived here- went to school here and still live here and know each other.

A lot of the pitting between neighborhoods is from our image starting 40 years ago. The riots on Plymouth gave us an image that we were a hotbed of crime and civil unrest and civil disobedience. It was the same time as the Watts Riots in LA. It was a matter or a civil disruption. Most of the African American people lived down around Plymouth at that time which had traditionally been a Jewish area. Well we had race riots. A lot of the businesses were set on fire. Even though they were Af. Am. Owned at that time, although a lot were still Jewish. It was the epicenter of our civil rights demonstrations in Minneapolis. That gave North Minneapolis the reputation that that was where crime was going on- in '67.

At that point a lot of people north of Broadway wanted to disassociate themselves with the ones south of Broadway. That created an artificial barrier- we didn't want to be associated with those people or those bad neighborhoods. It took a lot of time to overcome that. Right now N. Minneapolis has 13 neighborhoods with 12 neighborhood orgs. The city defines those boundaries. Since NRP came around in the 1990s, the neighborhoods have had money to organize with in each neighborhood- to hire community organizers. That strengthened within each neighborhood that strengthened the community building. Now we are at the point where we are reaching across neighborhood boundaries. Lowry was the divide because north of Lowry was the Camden planning council. That is another city designation. We had south of Lowry- the Near North. There were 6 neighborhoods. First the neighborhoods in the North and the neighborhoods in the south were working together. Now we are getting to the point where all 13 neighborhoods are starting to work together. We are seeing each other as a part of a region- trying to do regional planning. We are no longer worried about being labeled as north Minneapolis.

Demographically there was great change. Most of the AF Am and Hmong were south of Lowry, most north were white. The immediate income was higher in the north. That is how the perception was. But in Camden we are seeing a shift in our demographics. We have a lot of older residents who are leaving. We have a lot of young families who are coming in and immigrants and Af Am. That has happened in the last 20 years. We are

doing projects together- both sides of the region. We are doing projects together, we meet regularly, they have community organizers for both sides. For one thing, they share staff because I am not only the organizer for Cleveland, but also for my own neighborhood, Victory.

And then there is another one for Lyn-Bohannon and Shingle Creek. We talk regularly we share ideas, we work together in organizing, we do joint projects. In Camden, the boards of the 7 neighborhoods meets quarterly to discuss. A couple of joint projects have out of there like the north housing fair and the positive perceptions which makes that brochure...

The whole idea of that was to prove the perception of north Minneapolis. About 2 years ago the Northway community Trust convened all the neighborhoods together. Folwell and Webber Camden choose not to. But all the others from Shingle Creek to Downtown meet monthly. We find core values that we agree on and initiatives that as a region we would like to work on. For a long time, Broadway was the divide. Then it was Lowry. And now we are like let's not have a divide.

I see a lot of land use issues in North Minneapolis. WE have less green space than other parts of the cities. And we have less access to the river because our river is industrial which is all lined by business. We don't have all the trails down there. We do have Victory Memorial Drive, but we have fewer bike trails, or bike lanes. I think the mayor his trying to work on that. We have denser housing. We don't have big lots, and a lot of single family homes. We are experiencing now that a lot of the single family homes are turning into rental properties. And now a lot of them are foreclosing. We do have a crisis here with foreclosure.

The majority of the foreclosures in the city in the past 2 years have been in North Minneapolis. And a lot of the community corridors and nodes like Penn and Lowry have gone downhill. They are finally getting some attention- some redevelopment. A lot of that goes back to the notion that North Minneapolis is subprime and that we can't get a developer who wants to invest in it. I think it is starting to turn around. Historically we only have two commercial corridors- Broadway and Lyndale. We have a lot of Community Corridors like Penn and Lowry.

When I was young there were convenience stores on every corner. Your mom would send you half a block if you needed milk. Half the time it was in the front of someones house. The buildings are still there, but half of them are empty and the other half are braiding or nail shops. It doesn't fit into the city's plan for what they want the city to look like, so they just ignore it. That is another land use issue.

It is harder to work with rental oriented community because they are not committed to the community and don't expect to be there that long. It is all about homeowner now. If you are renter, you are almost considered second class. A lot of the people just don't want to reach out to the people that are renting because they will be leaving. The perception goes both ways. I am going to only be here 6 mos to a year, and oh they are only going to be

here 6 mos to a year. So there is no sense in trying to get them involved. That makes it difficult. We are not predominately a rental community, but we do have more and more rental properties. A lot of that has to do with speculative landlords which are increasingly getting foreclosed on. And a lot of them do not tend to have the best tenants which sours people on the renter issue even more. It makes it difficult to organize. Well not difficult to organize, but it does make it hard to include renters in the organization.

One thing that is challenging is that new landlords are using single family homes to rent. You can not always tell where the rental properties are. Recently for the anniversary of our NRP plan, we went to these properties and left postcards asking people what their concerns were in the neighborhood.

The data is not accurate in the City of Minneapolis for a lot of reasons. When a person goes to the city and puts that down as his primary address and does not get a rental license. Sometimes you cannot even find these landlords because they give that address as their address. Even when they get a rental license they don't always put down the right address. Most of the multi unit housing is on Penn and some on Lowry- our two community Corridors. But we know there is a ton of rental property that is in the neighborhood that are single family homes. Sometimes they don't get a rental license sometimes they do. They don't screen their tenants. Now what we are seeing is a lot of people just walking away from their properties.

They never had any intention of paying the mortgage. They used it for 6 mos to a year and collected rent and walked away. So now we have a lot of vacant properties, boarded up and falling to pieces...

We are trying to get the teachers federal credit union to go in over here. They are looking to open an office in the city. And they are building a financial institution over there- with a drive through and the whole thing. Last I heard they hadn't attracted a financial institution. But if we build it they will come. "

Allan Malkis of Northway Community Trust:

"I do not live in N. Minneapolis. I live in St. Paul. 2 of our 4 staff live in North Minneapolis. I do work here, our office is on Broadway and Irving. It is on the boarder of Near North and Willard Haye. I have been involved on the northside since I took this job two years ago tomorrow. My background is in doing research for non-profit organizations. I worked for United Way and a place called the Urban Coalition, for 9 years, which is no more. I have always been involved in helping organizations get their hands on census data and other research information.

I actually was involved with the people that started the Northway community Trust. When I was at the Urban Coalition I was asked to advise the group on how to set up their research and evaluation work. And a few years later I realized they were hiring and thought- oh that is a job I helped them plan for. I had some experience.

I know Angela from her contacting us when I was working at NCT. I think she knows my sister that is on the board of the Northcountry Development Fund.

My perceptions of life in N. Minneapolis. There is a lot of variation in N. Minneapolis. When people from outside the community hear about N. Minneapolis they think crime. But in reality there is a great deal going on, a great deal of variety. There is a lot of optimism and opportunity. There is also a lot of tragedy and concern. There is a real sense of frustration from communities and neighborhoods that feel that they always get the short end of the stick. They don't feel trusting of all the promises are made. They still see all the resources going downtown and elsewhere. Oh everyone says that N. Side is our top priority, but when money gets handed out, they don't feel like it comes to the N. Side. There are other communities on the N. Side, and many people who have lived here for years and years. There are also many people who come and go. There are many people that are very committed to the Northside. Some that have lived here a long time, and some that have lived here a short time.

There is tension between some of the newer immigrant communities and the longer term residents, both European Am and African Am. There is a sense that people who are new to the community get a lot of attention. There is the question that why are these people suddenly getting attention and resources when we have been here for so long and aren't getting any. Why do people seem to care that the South East Asian refugees came here and are poor, but no body seems to care that African Americans have been here and poor for a long time, or Whites for that matter. There is a certain amount of tension around that. There is a lot of concern. People think redevelopment of the N. Side is inevitable. But people are afraid that because of it the people that should benefit from it will be forced to move and rich people will move in and take advantage of all the new stuff. And poor people will just get shunted to some other neglected neighborhood.

So that is a fear that a lot of people have about the development of the N. Side. Our mission at Northway is to make sure that when development comes it will benefit the whole community. We have dialogued with the CPED and Empowerment Zone of the city. That is one of the reasons we have that neighborhood alliance. For them to come up with a development plan that they are willing to stand behind. So that they can come up with a development plan that they can present to the city and the developers. It is in the works now. That market scan I talked about is part of it. It is supposed to provide the crucial pieces of information for them to make their plan.

A coop should be somewhere that people can get to easily with public transportation, especially in a neighborhood like this. It has to be somewhere that they can afford to rent, where the capital cost of getting a building is not too high. It might make more sense to be on Lyndale in terms of rent. But then you are on one side of the neighborhood and it can be hard for people to get there. It is easy to go North-South, but East-West is harder. Not as much goes East-West so it would be harder to find a place that is accessible.

Also, Cub Foods has a good selection of organic foods, a decent selection; not a very good selection of produce, but more of prepared foods. But they do seem to be making an effort for healthier foods. And it is not clear to me how much of a demand for healthy food there is in the community. And it is not clear to me how much a food coop would be able to compete with Cub on that level, since Cub may have already established itself.

I don't see as many opportunities for people in N. Minneapolis, well let me take that back. Most of the people that live in N. Minneapolis work somewhere else, because there are not as many employers in N. Minneapolis. They work in other parts of the city or other cities. A lot of the employers that are in N. Minneapolis do not draw from the local community. It is a self perpetuating cycle. If you don't know anyone that works in the neighborhood, it is going to be hard to find out about jobs in the neighborhood. If you don't have any friends that say- hey we have a job opening, you are not going to know.

N. Minneapolis has 3 city council members on a 13 person council. That is about par for its percentage of the population in the city. One of the council members is the council president, and that is power. However, N. Minneapolis has a very low voter turn out. I have done some tracking of data as part of my looking a research of N. Minneapolis. They have very low turn out compared to the rest of the city. Even when they had a highly contested race between Don Samuels and Natalie Johnson Lee, the turn out was low. A lot of people in North Minneapolis, some are not citizens, some are not registered, and some have lived in the area a long time and don't feel like it is worth it. So N. Minneapolis doesn't have as much clout as it could have because of its low voter turnout. North Minneapolis doesn't have a lot of the big employers that South Minneapolis does. In Midtown where they did that big development in the Sears building, there are a lot of major employers to get that job done. N. Minneapolis has less clout that way. There has been a certain ability of the city and developers to pit the neighborhoods against each other. Oh well, if you don't want it, we are going to go to that neighborhood.

One of the reasons for doing this Northside Neighborhood Alliance is so that people don't get pulled in different directions and divided and conquered. So that is one of the things that we feel has been lacking on the N. Side. We want to try and think of the region as a whole. That is part of the background of the Northway Plan; this region doesn't come together well to make itself an effective power. That's what has to happen. Part of this marketing campaign is not just aimed at people outside the region, but also at people inside so that they identify and feel good about living in N. Minneapolis. “

Chingmay, Independent Consultant:

“I do not live in N. Minneapolis. I actually am involved in North Minneapolis through my church. I know Bernadette through that. I also know that Northwest Area Foundation (Northway Community Trust) is something that I am interested in. The food project, I love the idea. You are what you eat. When you look in disadvantaged areas you don't see grocery stores, you see convenience stores where they carry processed food. You see implications for health.

My hope is to get involved with the Northway Community Trust. I want to share ideas, but share knowledge and best practices so that none of us is starting from scratch. I like the community building and economic development aspects of Northway.

My hope is that they will partner. The idea of having a food store is big. It is good to have a farmers market, but it is important to have a store because there are no stores. They need to build stores so people can have fresh food. Farmers can sell what they have, but we need to provide food all year long.

North Minneapolis I look at in two ways. It has a lot of potential. A lot of skills, but a limited access to opportunities where people can become self sufficient. Because of the limited opportunities you have a concentration of poverty. I haven't done research. But this is my perception. You have people who are working 3-4 jobs and cannot make ends meet. You have people with a lot of stress. It has a lot of distress, but a lot of potential. A lot of people with skills. You need to find out what assets they have and develop those assets. And the community can be revitalized.

Unfortunately the image that comes to mind is tainted by what I watch in the media. The sound is associated with guns. Which is sad. It is a community which is in distress, with a concentration of poverty. If the city and other institutions can find a way to tap into the

Also encourage people to become part of the solutions to the problems in their community.

Most of the people that come to the church do not live in N Minneapolis. It is a sense of community, but maybe a false one. We are only there for a few hours. And then we go back to where we are from. I am sure there is a sense of community in other parts of North Minneapolis."

Evaluation of the Northside Food Project

Questions that related directly to the evaluation of the NFP's work in North Minneapolis included:

- How did you first learn about the NFP?
- What, in your words, is the NFP?
- What have your experiences been with the NFP?
- What advice do you have for the NFP?
- Why is their work important?
- How would you like to be involved with them in the future?
- What recommendations do you have for directions the NFP should take or good community partners for them?

Responses included stories about how interviewees first learned about the NFP and recommendations for partnerships (both with the interviewees and in the general community). Interviewees in general had a good understanding of the scope of the NFP's work. There were also some general discussions about health community organizational growth.

Margaret Lund of the Northcountry Cooperative Development Fund:

"Probably from Angela, heard about NFP for the first time a couple of years ago. Every once and a while I get a call from someone in North Minneapolis that wants to do a food coop. But this particular project, you know, the other projects. A couple of years I probably heard about this one from Angela. With an interest to deal with the issues- the food issues- the accessibility issues.

Mostly just through Angela; we have had a couple of conversations about it. I have not formally met with them as a group or at a presentation. Angela used to work for us and I think that she would have a good idea of when we would fit in and what kinds of services we can bring."

Elizabeth Archer of the Wedge Coop:

"I first learned about NFP from Angela. She was around here with her work for Northcountry Development Fund, which exists to fund coops. She had a position there. The Wedge was one of the founding members there. And actually still has some funds locked up in it. Our financial manager is on the board and now on the board for the credit union they are starting. Angela started contacting us last year about NFP. We email and we have had her here to do a presentation to our staff about NFP. I understand it to be a grassroots effort that is trying to figure out with the help of institutional partners, like the university, to figure out why there is a food desert. Well, I think they know why they have one. They are just trying to figure out how to change that. When someone has the option to take a long bus ride out of the city and back to go to a grocery store, or when their other option is to shop at a convenience store, that doesn't strike me as a very good way to run a city.

I am the members services director. I did do operational stuff before. I have been here since 1981, and have ordered food and dealt with registers, trained people. I haven't been involved with the NFP at all, but I want to be. I had talked in the Spring with Angela about doing a cooking class. But that finally happened after months of looking for a kitchen. By the time she had contacted me with dates, I had planned my summer out and made my commitments. I would like to next year, to help out with the teaching."

Tom Guettler of Farm in the City:

"The only bit of the NFP that I am familiar with is from Angela, we used to work together. She left about a year after me. We were working together at Northcountry Coop Development fund. Her initial involvement was that it was a coop. There were some neighborhood residents that thought because she was working for a coop that she knew everything about coops. And beyond the food coop part of it, I don't know anything about it. I remember looking at the website like 2 years ago and I remember Angela saying that she was managing director, or something like that.

This is a real subject that I am interested in because of the work I am doing at farm in the city- we have a CSA. It is a subscription, people are paying a fee for it. I was talking to my garden manager and we were talking about the fact that wouldn't it be cool if we could offer CSAs and not have it be fee based; because most people cannot afford it.

Really the bigger issue is people do not know what to do with it. You can say that here is a bunch of fresh fruits and vegetables, but people do not know how to prepare it. You can say here is a bunch fresh fruits and veggies, but unless people know how to prepare it, then it does no good. There is a whole foundation here that we take for granted. Unless you have experience buying and preparing food, it doesn't do you any good to say now you have access to it. The bigger nut to crack, which seems like it is being addressed in the NFP, is how do you bring people around to a whole different way of eating and preparing food. "

Gretchen Musicant, City of Minneapolis:

"The NFP: It seems to have a couple different origins. I think some of it was originally formed for its interest in setting up a coop. As that was explored there are so many other elements to helping the residents of the n side get access to healthy food. But I think that it has expanded in its approach. The approach is more important than attaining that goal right away.

I see them as very good at raising a sense of awareness of need and equity in that community. They are trying out different approaches. Some successful. It's hard to remember when things happen. Well I did hear about Jerry's market, and an interest in a coop there, which I think predated NFP. And then as we tried to figure out what role we can play with this new STEPS program- to help. Along that path we discovered the NFP.

Steps is a grant from the feds to the state of MN, and is granted to 4 cities- MPLS, St Paul, Rochester and Winona. 6 fold- it is a state wide program; to address diabetes, heart disease asthma through looking at nutrition exercise and exposure to 2nd hand smoke.

Our approach in Minneapolis has been to use a community guided approach. There is as consortium. WE have tried to use some of the money as mini grants out to the communities. We have worked with the NFP to improve access and education to healthy food. Quite a range of people sit on the Committee- I think Angela is on it. Urban League, YMs and YWs, Heart association, community orgs, community members. I don't staff it, I just show up a few times.

I didn't make the funding decision myself. In public health it is insufficient to just educate people. You have to change the system. If you want to change how people eat and exercise, you have to change the environment, if you want to make systemic change.

NFP is trying to change the type of food available to people is really what this type of change is all about. The NFP's mission to change the environment is really in line with what we wanted. I think the money was use to support the establishment of some farmers markets and to support the community garden.

When Cub Food came in up on the Northside. There had been a grocery store that had left. I talked to someone in the corporate side of cub. I said how are you gonna do that store on the n side? We are gonna stock it and price it just the same. I thought that is good, because sometimes stores have to price things more expensive in low income areas to pay for security. A while later I asked how it was going, and he said we cannot sell produce, only meat. And that very cryptic analysis, just an offhand conversation gave me an inkling of the importance of helping the community shift their dietary interest in skills and preparation. Their familiarity with different types of food. I think that processed food and meat has emerged because of what is available.

We need to reintroduce family to produce and give them the availability to cook. ...otherwise we will make food available, and we will build it but they will not come. That is what I like about the NFP, that they are doing this kind of work, there is a recognition of that. They are working on not only availability but also this other front.

I can't say that I have encountered a similar organization to the NFP. Doesn't mean it isn't out there. Certainly IATP is working on the s side to increase access, but not the coupled with the idea of gently introducing people to food by getting them to think about cooking it. There are Extension classes that are trying get people to think about nutrition. I really like the idea of growing food in order to learn about nutrition, the curiosity of being in nature. You grow something and there it is, how can you not taste it?

There is the Youth Farm, Farm in the City, and from a food perspective and a youth development perspective- that combo is of interest to us because we are interested in youth development.

Gretchen Musicant of the City of Minneapolis:

"I haven't seen the report or read the expectations of the work that was contracted.

I have some things that cause me pause. I have been an advocate for NFP. I nominated Angela to receive an award, the Mayors healthy city award. We have written about them for the newsletter that a city puts out. On housing and crime- and there is an article that will be written about the NFP with pics. The photographer is very excited about the photos for that article.

I have gotten other big push backs from council member B. Johnson. Is this a symptom of visibility and the fact that it is a small farmers' markets. While the emphasis should be the community, there is a small population that need to be paid attention to. The other push back is that they talk up the topic and the issue very well, but what have they done? I think people's expectations are high for what they are doing. Other Northside residents would get in their car and come, just to be supportive.

As we spoke before the tape went on there are certainly challenges with the city's regulations. We in the department do not know about the challenges intimately enough to be the only internal advocate. We need to keep a partnership to advocate for some change....

I think we are on the verge of continued interest in issues like obesity and nutrition. I see that on the horizon. Has the NFP connected with CPED? It seems important to connect to those that do planning on the n side. Connect with Tom Christensen. If he knows about something, then it will keep popping up. He was recently appointed to be head of CPED by Mayor.

Strikes me that North Memorial Hospital is interested in serving the N.side. Not that they are in Minneapolis, but they are close. Most hospitals have a sense of community investment. This could be a way for them to plug into prevention.

I wonder about the new director of IATP. Not that they are a funder. But they are interested in trying out more local activities. A continued partnership with that org. like you take this side of town, we take this. He talked about wanted to do something similar that is done in other cities- a whole sale distribution site for Minneapolis area small farmers that could be accessible to hotels, and restaurant. I don't know if NFP could have a role in that. What if you could base it on the N.side. Provide jobs.

They do need to have a growing visibility of their activities to bring tangible benefit. We have a grant that lasts a few more years, and then we are hoping to attract more dollars to bring in the community to help with nutrition and exercise. We will continue to go where the need is- you can paint a brush stroke on where the need is consistently in MPLS. Some of the early educational work that was done in the STEPS effort, didn't reach a lot of people. Some kind of education is slow. But I think we will be pressured to figure out how to have a larger scale impact. Things need to be culturally based, especially when you talk about something as intimate as food. There is not a broad brush that will have any impact. We need community buzz, and even if they are not acting, they are at least talking about it. We had a survey a few years ago that said that 80% of parents read to their kids under 2, and I think it was exaggerated. People knew it was a good thing to

say. That is where we should be with the food issue. To move the community further along on wishing they could eat better food because after that comes a change of behavior. A two level change- a connectivity to the topic and then a behavior change.”

Chingmay, Independent Consultant:

“I came to know about the NFP through Bernadette who is one of the cofounders. Bernadette and I know each other from church. It was when I first moved to the Twin Cities and I was looking for a job. I have a background in non-profit management and evaluation, etc. We started talking and we figured out that in the long run they would need an evaluation incorporated in the activities that they do.

I look at the NFP as doing multiple things. The first is to bring fresh food to North Minneapolis. As you know when you have low income communities fresh food is an asset they lack. A, I see them trying to do that. It is attached to the health. So they are trying to improve the health of the community, etc. I actually have been talking to them a lot to see if we can work together. Especially with my evaluation background, but especially that I am running a micro-finance program.

Our interests are coming together because we are both trying to help our community health; bringing in fresh produce, encouraging farmer, having a store so they can employ people. It is tied to health. It is really in line with community revitalization and economic development.

My background is non profit management. I have a degree in public administration with a focus on non-profits and international relations, from a school on the east coast; Seaton Hall. You can tell by my accent that I come from abroad and bring an international perspective. But also I want to understand the domestic system, in non-profit management. I work with foundation world as well as nonprofit world. I have helped start things from scratch. I am thinking that with my background, and where they are at this point, I think that I can bring things to the table. I can help them in their development as they go forward.

They have taken off the ground as an organization. They are also the first of their kind. They are starting something at a very good time. It is really amazing because it has good visibility and everyone wants to invest in this project. I am looking at their next steps through two lenses. One is that as people are interested in them, they could grow too fast. They need to invest in their infrastructure. They need to take the good steps to build their infrastructure.

Don’t grow too fast. It is like a child, if they grow too fast, it is not good. Angela and Bernadette are conscious of taking the necessary steps to build the needed infrastructure. For example: doing a strategic plan. Go into the field and get some feedback on how people see the NFP; getting input from colleagues. Will help them see what their strengths are. I am sure they see their strengths internally, but it is good to go out and see what other people think. Sometimes you cannot see your strengths yourself.

Using that information it will open up a good cause. I mentioned strategic plan, but also financial resources. I don't see this being a problem for NFP. They are revitalizing the community by building systems. I see them empowering the residents to really take charge. It also involves health, and economics. Financial resources are needed, but unless they get a lot of competition, which they don't have right now.

Also have an evaluation process. Assess it to see what can be changed, what can be improved. I look at the evaluation that you do not do at the end of the project, but as part of the daily process of a project.

Collecting the information you need will help you make the right decision. It is something you build in, not done at the end. It is not traditional. It is not pre/post. It is more about story telling. Listening- figuring out what the community needs. You go out and you listen and after two years and you have been involved in the community, you say this is what we have been hearing from the community.

Angela and I have been trying to get in touch for quite a while. Next thing you know I am in Africa. I have not had a chance to talk with them about forming a board. A good board can really help guide an organization. A board needs to help an organization with where they are right now. And look at who can help them move to the next stage. You need the passion and the skills to move them. Don't forget to bring in a couple of people from the community. You can bring in people with the money and passion and skills too, but the community can bring in a really good perspective.

I am looking at the capacity building as a way of ensuring success. The success and the failure depends on the ability to build capacity in the community. If people don't feel that they own it. I see it as a way of transferring the ownership. This is ours. We are what we eat. It is a way to protect it. It has become part of who we are. Also as an educational tool. It helps people get ownership and power.

It will have to be self sustaining but also have the social benefits. People's voices need to be heard to shape the direction of the organization. And also you need to build capacity in the areas that are needed- to ensure the sustainability. The organization moves forward you need to capacity build. You cannot do without.

The first characteristic of a community leader is passion. If they don't have passion, you can train and train until you turn blue. If you don't have the passion, and they see how this is important in their life and in the lives of their children. I think if people can make a personal connection, it is the reality, it is sort of selfish, but it is important to see that connection. Like wow, this could be my child. Passion first, and the other skills you can learn as you go.

Leadership is something- not sure if you are born with it, but you can learn to be a leader. But the driving force is passion. When we are talking about the Grameen bank, the

professor started and several people's passion for it and learned the skills along the way....

My recommendation for the NFP, is that you stay focused. If you spread yourself in many directions, you may not be doing everything in the best way. It is a great effort to get it up and running. They are up and running, but I believe the next thing is to set up a store. I am not entirely sure that is their next step. Stay focused. Do it well, in the way that you build a strong foundation. You can have a vision of where you want to be 5 or 10 years from today, but build a strong foundation and ask how you can sustain it. If Bernadette and Angela are no longer there, how can we keep this going?

Strategic thinking. Sustainability involves having the resources and building capacity. I see them as a grassroots community based project, but also I hope that it is a community led project. It is about ownership and empowerment. But it also allows people to unleash their creativity in a good way. Hopefully it can be replicated in another part of North Minneapolis. Would be nice if people didn't have to walk so far to the market? Every person should have access to fresh produce."

Debbie Nelson, Cleveland Neighborhood Association

"NFP is trying to improve the access to nutritional food in North Minneapolis. They want to improve health in N. Minneapolis. Educate the residents on nutrition and eating healthy and how it effects the rest of your life. And to improve access to healthy food, or food in general.

I first learned about them when we were trying to organize a community garden here at the school. We first had to get in touch with the school. We talked to community ed, and at the time they told us we needed more local partners. Jerry Izaki, who was the head of community ed told us about NFP and the work they had done at CityView School for the community garden. So we pulled Angela onto our team to work for this.

We have been talking to Angela about how we can get the kids involved in the garden and nutrition ed and maybe a farmers market where we could sell some produce. We were hoping that we would be having one too this summer because we started on this garden like 18 months ago.

I had Angela come to the Victory meeting to talk about a food coop. That is where most people have talked about the need. I know about the city council meeting where she talked about how restrictive establishing a farmers market is. I know from experience how hard the city makes it to do any kind of business in the city. There is a reason- the city owns the Lyndale farmers market- do they want competition?

I would really like them to be successful with the food coop and help them bring that about. But as I told Angela, if it is going to be down by the Urban League or on Broadway, it is not going to serve us. It is too far for us. My advice to her was that you need to hear where the people are that want the market. If you want a grassroots or member driven thing, you have to put it where the members are. The U wants them to put it down there.

I think they need to do a lot more listening to people where there might be members. We have a lot of people up here who are interested. I don't disagree that they need it down there. But coops are a very difficult thing to do with people who don't understand a coop. It is not a service that someone else provides. What might help is that we could get a credit union up here so that people can get the idea of a coop. There is supposed to be one going in on Broadway. But whether that is close enough to lure people from here...

Last words: keep on keeping on. Community organizing is a long road, a long struggle. Even when you get a good core group of people organized, people end up going their own ways. It is hard to partner with the bureaucracy of the city. You have the city council, the park board and the school board. You have to deal with each of them separately. That makes it difficult. We were originally going to put our garden out by the edge of the school property, but then we learned that was half park land. And I said, there is no way we are going to deal with two bureaucracies here. We cannot even deal with one. I know the park board does not allow community gardens on their property. "

Kevin at CDS:

"I first got involved in conversations about a food store in N. Minneapolis three, maybe 4 years ago. I was asked to come over to a meeting with the N.W. area foundation. They were beginning a relationship with N. Minneapolis as one of the communities in the area that they serve. One of the project managers asked me to come over and sit in on some meetings that were at that time small grocers that were struggling financially and wanted to look at a new investment model that would recapitalize the stores through consumer cooperative ownership. I probably went to 4 or 5 of those meetings, and the last one was held at the Northcountry Development Fund where I met Angela Dawson.

I had talked to her and exchanged emails with her as a staff member of NCDF. I had that conversation with Angela and a couple of members from the N. Side. Overall, those conversations were not productive in my mind. Those individuals that were wanting to set up a coop I don't believe were sincere in their effort, or they were lacking in cooperative ownership and governance. I think they really wanted to get a cash infusion to keep their stores open. In my opinion it was very not transparent. I ended up telling folks at the NCDF that if you are going to pursue cooperative development, here are the steps that are required, here is the transparency needed, the governance attributes that need to be incorporated. Here are the standards that I would put on any money that you put into the project. I don't see this going anywhere and I am going to withdraw myself from the conversation. Myself and another person stepped away and said good luck.

About a year and a half went by. One of the reasons that I got invited into the conversation in the first place was because CDS has been working on a study since 2002 about why communities are losing grocery stores. How cooperative ownership of stores might be a solution to the challenges in a community or as an alternative to what is currently available. Typically that would be a natural or organic foods focus. How do we start a model for food coops across the country? We have cobbled together bits of

money and sweat equity and over the last couple of years have formed a program called Food Coop 500. It has national partners and then CDS. The national partners are the National Cooperative Bank, National cooperative Impact, National Cooperative Grocers Association. We are actively working with 16 communities across the US going through the due diligence about whether or not they can have a coop. In addition to those 16, we are handling a large number of questions about their first steps. We have a consultant on staff that is working on that. We have developed some models and best practices. That has been going on for 5 years.

Over that time a Northside group applied for some funding through Food Coop 500. They were not successful. I believe it was the tail end of the previous folks trying to get their effort going. Or it was the beginning of Angela's time. Her name popped up in the process. Angela and I have exchanged some emails and we had lunch a couple of months ago. Basically we outlined the resources that CDS can offer and what our other partners may have to assist this process. What might we have or be able to contribute to the conversation that NFP is having with the UMN. That was reenergized in our 2-3 hour lunch conversation. That is the arc of my interactions with the NFP. "

Kim Boyce of the Urban Extension:

"My involvement with the NFP is when Bernadette and all were conceptualizing it. I sat in on a meeting when they were writing a grant to support it. And the reason they brought me in was probably two fold- one was I was just transitioning out of my role as county extension director for Hennepin County. So I had an official role in relation to the N. Side. Barb Grossman, who you probably talked with, Bernadette was on the Extension committee for Ramsey County. My involvement was at the front end when they were talking about what do you know about N. Minneapolis, about how things are done there, how does this fit, when it was first being conceptualized. Now I am in the dark, for the last year.

One of the ideas that was being talked about was connecting with a group of farmers to do some more direct marketing. The farmers were out from Todd County, out near Long prairie. My job in extension takes me all around the state, including that area and that is partly why I was interested. Not that I know any farmers in Todd County, but I do know some of the county coordinators and officials. It was intriguing to me to think what it would be like to have farmers from that area, from Todd or Morrison County to have a direct link to specific sites in n. Minneapolis, for produce or goat meat, or whatever. My understanding that it was like a distribution center, or a series of them. What would happen if people would buy in, like what happens in other parts of the state where people buy 20 shares of a farm and I give them a bag of fresh vegetables every other week.

That was more of what I understood, that distribution would be a neighborhood location convenient to people in N. Minneapolis. This conversation had also come up right after the shooting at the flower shop. They were trying to figure out what to do with it. And that was maybe going to be one of those distribution spots.

The other reason they had involved me is that my specialty is in leadership. They saw this parallel with food health. How do we engage people at this really grassroots level in understanding leadership- things they could do. We don't want to replicate things that go on in the NRP program. If someone wanted to be on a board- how do you bring them together, what skills do they need to develop. So they asked me to share some models on community leadership training programs that we use in Extension. And if you were going to do something like that, what would be the best mechanisms? I advocated for a leadership cohort- that you do not just do a one time workshop on leadership to whoever shows up. You assemble a group of 15-20 people that agree and say they will commit, and it will take several months. They say they are going to learn about leadership and attend 8 sessions over 4 months. They are going to practice it, and learn it and do it at the same time with someone coaching a guiding so that we can see what works.

My experience in teaching leadership is that you need to have a "for what". There are some people who are interested in learning. They will just show up. But most people what to apply what they are learning to something they are passionate about. Leadership for what becomes an important part of the question- if that relates to creating a sustainable food system for N. Minneapolis, or creating a safer community, or creating whatever that might be. Having a pretty clear focus is important to attract people because then they can apply their leadership skills to some outcome that they can see in a reasonably short period of time.

I am one of the leaders of the leadership trainings, but each one of them is sort of custom designed. The leadership needs of the people who are elected soil and water supervisors are very different than citizens from N. Minneapolis. I would definitely be interested to do a training for the NFP. Although there are common themes in teaching leadership, each training is customized according to what the audience is trying to do.

Again, my contact in the last year has been limited. There was flurry in getting grants done on a tight schedule. I let Bernadette know that having a few more days would have been helpful. I haven't heard a whole lot since that got going. I have a lot of other projects going on. In my file cabinet I have things that start in the front and move to the back. I get 6-7 requests a month to work on different projects. Of those, 2 actually get started. That is my question to them, as it evolves, is there some interest in working with the leadership side of extension? I am glad to hear that they want to stay in touch. It was an intriguing project as we laid out the project. It was about food security and fresh nutritious food. And it was about leadership, and sometimes those things do not have the most obvious connection for people. There were all kinds of creative ideas. The flower shop could be a lab where horticulture students could work. How do you link underemployed young people to the food system in MN? There are lots of opportunities for employment in MN in the food system; if it is production, distribution, marketing. It is a huge industry. I don't know if very well, but there were all sorts of ideas. "

Kirsten Saylor of Gardenworks:

"What I see the NFP, I see them being one of the more fun community food security orgs out there. It has to do with history, people and getting us out of a food desert. How do we

evaluate or assess what our community food security status is and then how can we impact that.

Also, what are the stories around food and how can we bring it back to the culture; the cultural relevance of food, the spirituality of food. That is my understanding of them.

We have been talking about a food summit. That is related to community gardens because truly the interests we have are about food. People want to grow their own food, and that is where our hearts sit. Beautification is great, but we want to see people be food security and know how to grow.”

Mustafa of Northpoint:

“What happened about a year ago, we sat down with the NFP. Roy Richardson, myself and Stella Whitney West all sat down. We talked about what they were wanting to do, what North Point was doing. We were supposed to follow up with another meeting about some collaboration. There has been some disconnect. I know- there have been lots of changes over here. And I have tried several times to contact NFP and not heard back from them. I keep wondering what they are doing over there. They are still there, that is what I wanted to hear. I want to hear that because I realize that North Point cannot do it by themselves. It is not a do it yourself project. WE are not going to get it done if we think of it as our project. We have to realize that there are strengths out there that we don’t have and how can we assist with that and how can we take from it?

And I, having been to different hunger conferences, even the FRAC (food resource action committee) conference in Washington, I think the NFP is one of the most viable ways of alleviating hunger. They talked about community gardening, they talked about the coop, they talked about nutrition classes. That is where we want to be as a hunger activist. That was my only involvement with them, that one day.

When I first came into this job two years ago, I was a baker, a chef, I didn’t know what was going on. Hearing about the NFP after doing this for a while, I was exhilarated to know people were doing that. I was like wow, someone connected with the UMN. That is why I kept wondering what was happening and wanting to make contact. They are going many different directions. I can tell Angela is a go getter. I can see that in her that she is not going to rest until it is done.

The farmers market is next the Center for Families? We have an office there, we offer classes to the public. In relation to that, Tim Barnes is writing a grant trying to send trucks down to Arizona all through the winter to gather up fresh produce. If they wanted to keep that going all winter, they could hook up with him.”

Chris at Mckinley Neighborhood:

“The NFP is a good name because it states flat out what it is. I was in early discussions about getting a food coop going in north Minneapolis. I have talked to both Bernadette and Angela. It is to change the perceptions of how food is handled, prepared, eaten, every facet of food in North Minneapolis. It is getting people to farmers markets to buy

fresh foods. Wondering why you pull off the most major road in N. Minneapolis, Broadway, you hit Burger King, McDonalds, KFC, within the stretch of a mile.

And honestly there are several thriving businesses on Broadway. But the most stable businesses there are the fast food businesses. It took us how long to get a foot locker up here, that is now a successful business. It took us forever to get Cub after Target closed. Look at this, I give Angela and Bernadette credit; the city of Edina has 47 thousand people in it and 7 grocery stores while North Minneapolis has 77 thousand people and one grocery store. We have SoLo foods, which is going out of business. And Cub has threatened to leave. So where does that leave us with food?

I can't remember the first time I heard the term NFP, but it was probably Fall of 2004. Even before that, sometime in early 2004. I heard about this guy that wanted to get a food coop going in North Minneapolis. His name was Chris... In terms of feedback for the NFP, I can't think of anything. We just met last week. Let us know where we can help more. We need to talk about it. I think a farmers market is a huge plus, and I think having it in our neighborhood is a plus. Having it in the same spot is a plus. Modern consumers need that stuff pounded into their heads. The old KISS idea, Keep it Simple Stupid. Not that people are stupid. But let's keep the momentum going.

Communication, let's do more of it. How can you help us we can help you. Fight for a food coop. I am sick of driving 7 miles to my coop. I talk to people occasionally. Talk is cheap. I will flat out ask people if they will give 100 bucks to pool funds to start a food coop. Most people say yes. I know it will take way more than that. Everyone that I know that would throw in 100 bucks is not going to reach the people that need food issues addressed most in their lives."

Maggie Ademek of the Sugar Project:

"I first learned about the NFP from Angela. I haven't been that involved this year because I was finishing up my dissertation. But we were involved with a group for a few years locally called Afro Eco. IT was a group of African American artists, scholars activists and me to develop and articulate dialogue about African American environmental thought.

Sam and I were the ones that hatched the idea. I met her through that. That was three years ago or so. She was still at Northcountry Development Fund when I met her. I know that some of the programmatic stuff they are interested in is starting a cooperative food enterprise. One of the things that I was never sure about; was it her stuff or NFP stuff, I know she was involved in the Northwest Area Foundation in early discussions on the N. Side. There was the food access, food issues and healthy foods piece.

There was this near north, far north issues. For example, before Cub foods went up there was not a grocery store down there for several years. We had a grocery store. Now they have one and we don't. We had a local one that was owned by a family. Kowalskis was so nice. You knew they were paying everyone well and you could get decent food there.

There are not a ton of community gardens in the Near North. I know about some of the other gardening stuff that is going on but don't know what they are doing. Loring School just down the street has beautiful garden called Kids Cook. They have gotten national attention. The kids are gardening and cooking and I know they have dignitaries come for fundraisers and stuff. But I don't know if they are affiliated with NFP.

Angela and I have had strategy discussions talking about NFP but we have also commiserated about living on the N. Side. Not just our own issues with food access and our own families, but also what we see as activists and community involvement, as north side residents through a citizen perspective... I think as NFP and Homewood studios as similar in that arts and food are real uniters across religious, class, cultural, gender, ethnic, geographic. I think they both have potential for people to feel united. People tend to split along racial and class lines and are concerned about violence and crime. I have had my car stolen 3 times and tons of bikes. It is not violent crime, but it is one of the things with living in this part of the city. The thing about food is that it is this positive thing. And one of the things that I have always wondered about is what relationship does this west side of town have with Robbinsdale? It is like a little agricultural community. They have a traditional butcher shop on main street, a farm supply shop, a little tiny main street, a coffee shop, a chuck wagon diner. It's an old blue collar town and it is right next door to North Minneapolis and you would never know it's there."

Barb Grossman of UMN Extension:

"The NFP is an effort to create and facilitate food access to north side residents, where there are few options right now. If all of the indicators are there, would be the creation of a food coop. The first thing is how is there better access to good food, healthy food and reasonably priced food.

I learned of them from Bernadette Longo about a year and a half ago. She is on the Ramsey extension committee. Our conversation first started there. We tried to think about if there is a connection between what the extension does and what the NFP wants to do. There have been some more pointed conversations. That is how I know.

Also, a year or so ago, at the university community partnership conference, a national conference, there was a visit to the Missionary Baptist church and there was a discussion on the food project. And I went to a forum, that I think the NFP sponsored, that was a community event. There has been no partnership in a designed way. We have had conversations looking at the possibility of joint grant getting.

My gig at the extension is urban operations. It has to do with what we know how to do at the extension and pushing it in urban areas; trying to make our programming applicable to urban areas. Food security for me means food access and affordability. That one does not go without eating, and that one does not rely on food shelves to eat; although food shelves can play a role in food security....

Much of what I know about NFP is what I hear from Bernadette, or from conversations with Angela. It is not from the outside looking in. I think as with all start up non profits,

there are challenges. To one, get the message out there, two to get the partnerships and three, getting the funding to do that. I think it should be an easier sell than a lot of other enterprises are because it is such a basic thing, and just from driving around on the north side there are not many outlets for food. And you can see that the corner stores have either been closed down because of illegal activity, or are not closed down, but have limited offerings. They are not the kinds of places that people should be going to do their grocery shopping, or even their fill in grocery shopping because they sell the popular foods. The idea behind the food project should not be a hard one to talk or think about.”

Forming a Food Coop

There was a wide variety of feedback on the topic of the Northside Food Project forming a food co-op in North Minneapolis. The questions asked ranged from:

- Where do you think a food co-op should be located in North Minneapolis?
- How do you build membership for a co-op?
- How will forming a co-op in North Minneapolis today be different than forming one in other parts of the city and at other points in history?
- What will the partnership with the University of Minnesota look like?
- What kind of support is there in the Twin Cities for forming a co-op in North Minneapolis?

The responses were from a wide variety of people, including experts in the co-op industry, residents and organizers in North Minneapolis, and food security activists. In general there was a positive response about the idea of forming a food coop in North Minneapolis. Another common opinion is that the coop should start small, and that it should be developed by the members that support it. There are great ideas about where and how to site a co-op and even how to fund it. There are also some good recommendations on how to form a coop steering committee and what role it should play.

David at Mo Better Foods: (these are notes from the interview, not a transcription)

“First thing to do when setting up a food secure community he did was to get in touch with the farmers. He is especially drawn to reversing the decline of the legacy of black farmers all over the States. There was a huge lawsuit at some point regarding the decline of the black farmer, totaling 2.3 billion \$.

He also always grounds his work in the history of West Oakland and communities of color across the nation. The community reinvestment act and the legacy of redlining is the base of so much disfunction. In Oakland, the network of food related stores is in a bad state. There is no longer a big box grocery store in W. Oakland, but there used to be a big one. The big one drove out all of the mom and pops’ type stores. But then the big one left, and now they are left with nothing.

His organization had a farmers market at a high school, the only one in W Oakland. When this market started, other local food activist organizations and Mo Better Foods began to recognize each other and banded together and applied for a USDA grant. They were called the West Oakland Food Collaborative, but they are no longer. In the beginning they wanted to all form a food coop together, but their visions were all too different. He wants to start from the total grassroots- involving farmers as one of the key bases to the coop. He started the farmers market to grow the coop membership.

The Food Collaborative selected a coop site, but now his org is not going to be involved in that site. It was land owned by the housing authority and the building was owned by Bridge Housing. It was selected because it is a newer building that would need little maintenance in comparison to the older building stock on Oakland. It is across from a

BART station (subway). The site is in a predominately black neighborhood- on Main Street which is known as the Harlem of the West.

He thinks that the traditional market analysis for picking a site is not very effective. It is easy to say that so much square footage can accommodate so many people, but the more important questions remain: how do you build membership from people that need their employment status and eating habits changed? He also withdrew from the Collaborative because color lines were being drawn in the organizing. On paper the others wanted to promote African American culture, but it became diluted.

The first coop name was going to be Soul Foods Coop, but then it was changed to Mandela Foods Coop. Now there are 4 coop stores that are going to start in W. Oakland. Each group that originally was in the Collaborative is starting their own. Mandela Foods Coop is moving into the site that was picked by all of them. David states that there is African American leadership in that coop, but not quite from the angle that he wanted to see. David's background is teaching business in West Oakland.

He wants to reorient his coop towards the community around the high school that first hosted the Mo Better Foods farmers market. He wants to employ high school students and reach out to local residents and alumni. And he wants it to be based on produce and food from black farmers.

The 4 coops could be a blessing. Each group has its strengths and weaknesses. Like other groups are better at writing grants to recruit from and hire outside the community. David wants to hire from within the community (relates to NFP's idea of building capacity). He doesn't want to focus on building jobs outside the community. He looks at numbers of people in work forces vs. how much the store might need. Ie: there are 1700 students at Castlemont High and Rainbow Grocery (a coop in San Francisco's Mission District) employs 300 people.

David also wants to tap into traditionally black college's alumni for various support. He is the chair of the Morehouse College Alumni Association. Right now he has students from Castlemont High doing a media training- maybe they are going to make a documentary about the farmers' market. They work there once a week. He wants to teach them how to tell stories and how to be in a leadership role

He feels like he has not gotten the same support that other W. Oakland organizations have gotten, even though he was the first organization to be working on food security issues. No one can own a coop by themselves, that is why he is building membership before the site. NGOs fall into a rut of setting up business without a business background. They end up having to pay consultants to do studies and that can cause the project to take years to develop

In addition to the coop, there needs to be funds available for individuals in the community to start businesses. He believes that it is very important to rely on the

entrepreneurial energy that is pre-existing in the community. Tap into what is there and what people want to gain from a new business.

David thinks that most African American organizations are volunteer run with no staff people. Things may be more slow going this way, but they represent a lot of people. In some ways he feels that the coop model takes so long. Maybe it could be quicker and more effective just to support local residents in starting small businesses.

He sees employee education as a big part of forming a coop- like teaching them about why a living wage is important and what it is, and how to use benefits, and why they get a check from the profits that the business takes. David is not sure who the consultants were for the East Bay Food Collaborative- we should ask Bill at the Mandela Food Coop

Business plans are only effective in analyzing one perspective of the future of a store. They usually depend on residents of a 5 mile radius to determine how many mouths need to be fed. It assumes though that the store is only about making money. It also assumes that there is going to be a very experienced store manager that will not make errors in what they buy. David does not see this as part of his coop, or rather as a priority.

Training the people in the community is a big part of the expenses- to teach about organic to people that are conditioned to eat McDonalds is tough. Another benefit of having a community owned store is that it can be a place where the community can sell its goods, and it can be a place for urban gardeners to sell their produce.

Universities can be overwhelming partners. They may fund organizations to get going and then cut funding, and start a new business just like the one funded in the community. There are instances of universities even stealing the names of nonprofits that they fund. There is exploitation going on between the university of California at Berkeley and West Oakland. They are treated like test subjects and not given sustainable growth in return. As you grow, it is more important to bring on community leaders, to keep the roots growing strong. It is important to remember that one doesn't always need to get a grant from the USDA to start a coop. Powers like them and the university can wear you down.

Language can be very tricky in organizing. The more powerful can use language to take advantage of the less powerful. For example when Mandela Farmers market opened (was first initiative of the East Bay Food Collaborative) the market claimed it was started by 2 African American farmers, not the USDA. But in reality it was funded by the USDA to get started. And now the collaborative has moved away from that initial thing they used to lure people to the market.

And it is important to remember that food is a very elite topic. The more relevant or immediate topics in a community are: violence; probation; unemployment; how to get to school and work; how to take care of family. In order to work on effective messaging, you need to figure out how to relate these issues to food. I.e: Health and obesity and food are related to a coop, ownership is related to a coop, employment is related to a coop. All of these critical issues can be addressed through the formation of a coop.

Regarding the question of a list serve related to coop formation in communities like W. Oakland and N. Minneapolis- he is interested. But maybe it could fit within the framework of one of the Community Food Security Coalition's list serves. His final piece of advice was don't be afraid to call celebrities. They can be helpful for fundraising and spreading the word."

Margaret Lund at Northcountry Coop Development Fund:

"At various times, people have recognized that that is a neighborhood that is under-serviced. I should look at the records, I don't keep very good track. It is more just a sense of inquiry- someone will call me and say I live over there... and it would be great to have it. I know we have had discussions about the Bryn Mar neighborhood which is deeper north. About sites: there wasn't anything that was organized- I don't think I have ever done a presentation for a group or anything like that.

I haven't spent a ton of time in North Minneapolis. I did grow up in Minneapolis and went to a city high school, and had some friends from North Minneapolis. A lot of kids went to my school from N. Minneapolis. I've been there but I haven't lived there or worked for an organization up there, so I have a sort of outsiders view. But in general, food coops find really good roots in college towns, in small towns. The biggest demographic that buy natural foods is based on education level. They tend to cluster around universities nationally. In that sense, there isn't a university in N. Minneapolis. I would guess that the educational attainment level isn't as high as other parts of the city.

In that sense it doesn't look like an area for a traditional food coop. but nationally there are cases of food coops in denser urban areas that would have a similar population as north Minneapolis. The model you should look at is not the typical food coop. There are examples and you want to look at what works and what doesn't with those models similar to NFP.

You need to know that you can cover up a lot of mistakes with a good market. You have to have a good market- a lot of it has to do with location, and where people shop. Make people go there. It has to be their choice to go there where they are going to spend the majority of their food dollars.

Everyone eats. You have to know this – low, moderate, high income. Everyone has to eat. And they have this food dollar. Having a good business in this industry is not necessarily susceptible to the economy because everybody eats. It doesn't matter if the Dow Jones is up or down.

So for the inner city type of project, the location... in order to get as much of that dollar as possible- it has to do with location and egress- can people get there? Are you near other things. A mongo part of the Wedge, for example is that they are right near downtown and really near freeway access. So it is a whole bunch of people who are not immediately in the neighborhood but put their food dollar in the neighborhood.

So when I talk about site planning- I talk about places like the Bryn Mar neighborhood, where it is close to downtown, close to freeway access, and I can get to Golden Valley easy. It's easy. The location stuff just makes a huge huge difference.

Location, location, location. That will really be a key factor... make it easy as possible to have people spend their food dollars there. Appeal to a large group of people. Part of it is location and part of it is not be a real narrow- you know. Not just being ethnic food or not just being natural food, but something where people are going to feel welcome.

In general in the Twin Cities we are a very food conscious community. There are a lot of high end markets like Lunds and Byerlys, more so than other communities. Food is really important to people here, which is good, but they also want choices. They have any coop they want to go to, plus they have Lunds and Kowalskis. The grocery market here is very well supplied.

What are the factors- making that experience really good for someone that is going to come from the outside. One obvious thing is to build it for the neighborhood, but is hard to supply it with just one neighborhood- even a densely populated one. It has to be a combination. And in a perfect world- a coop- that is where people meet. Like the wedge- someone that lives in the suburbs gets to see a place in the city. And say wow.

I think that is what it is about- getting people from out of the city to have a positive experience. That is a hard thing to do, but that is something a coop can do. There are particular ways of marketing to help that- having ethnic food or particular events geared toward particular groups. And again being close to downtown can help. I mean having people have to travel is another question. That is hard, the transportation issue. But are you going to be a convenience store type of thing, or something else?

Convenience stores have bars in the windows and real expensive products. That is something that works economically, but that is not something that is going to add to the community. There are a couple good examples- you know in Atlanta, the Sonata Coop is an inner city coop. Although it is getting to be a funkier neighborhood now though. But it hasn't always been that way. There is one in Detroit on Cass Corridor. But I haven't been there. There used to be one in Oakland.

The financing- I think the biggest deal is making the business work as a business. You need to convince everyone that it is easy to be part of it and easy to invest. Coop laws are state incorporations, so there is a big difference from state to state, and there are differences in what you can do. IN Minnesota the coop law states that you can have different classes of law. Class A would be member shares and Class B would be for non-voting investors with some kind of a dividend.

It is important to allow people to support without having to be a shopper every day. If they are willing to give \$5000 or \$10,000, create a vehicle for them to do that. You need to say to a bunch of people that if you think it is a great thing to have in the community

but it is not where you shop, are you willing to invest in it? You are willing to say- ok neighborhood, you can run it, I am just happy that you are doing it.

I think in Canada, they have had a much broader success selling community shares, like this. That seems to be something that would be attractive because I think a lot of people realize that North Minneapolis is under-serviced in a variety of ways.

And give people a chance to invest in it. If not, people won't think about it. And if they do think it about it, they will feel bad. I would say a good candidate for community investor is the member of an already established food coop. they are community minded and you could say, here is this thing you can invest in.

People in the food coops, of all the sectors really have a strong identity. They have a strong vision for a cooperative economy. That they would support another neighborhood. And if they understand the neighborhood determination part, like Minneapolis gets to run their own store. This is my neighborhood this is my store.

But you know it is a tough thing to do. Grocery stores are not lucrative. There is a tiny margin. There are a lot of impediments to that model. You need to get a good market study. Again, location is really key. Location. The more professional help you can get, the better.

When groups start up they say we want this thing in our neighborhood- like Northeast. And I think that group feels like they need to make all the decisions. But I think the more efficient model is to decide as a group what decisions need to be made at a local level. And which are the ways that other people have done that a ton of times and you can let them help you do it.

Well the financing is part of it. And the store management; for me, I would see if the other stores would loan a store manager, train a manager. They can train a person from the neighborhood, but the group doesn't need to figure out how to do a training themselves. And other food coops will help. They are very interested in it.

It is really important to figure out what you can do at the local level and to not reinvent the wheel; and so that the community in North can have say. They are not the Wedge; but what is important about us. What is different- not bad or good, just different.

But they way you run a produce department that is all the same. Keeping food going around. That is the same. That you can do the exact same way. The Northside food project can take that and say what is different? There are going to be things different in North. They are going to do outreach different. Education they are going to do differently, festival marketing they are going to do different things. They are gonna let people on the Northside determine how it will happen. People in Linden Hills are going to have a certain type of fair.

But the folks in North Minneapolis are going to do it different, because their folks are different. I don't think NFP is like this, but a lot of start up groups feel that no one can tell them what to do and they need to start it all themselves. You need to do the important things yourself.

If I were looking at two different sites and developers like NFP is dealing with—I would have market study done for each site. This guy _____ Davis does market studies for coops. He comes from the outside and doesn't have any of the baggage. The Wedge could maybe give you the money to do it.

It's not worth all the good will in the world to try and bring people into your store. You need that location, location, location again. And then you need to think about the site. Like what if the University site looks better- you need to think then about what are the costs of that relationship. What kind of autonomy are you going to give up? But you also need to think about having good people on your side negotiating your lease.

But I think that is often a mistake groups make- is when someone gives them something free or gives them a good deal. It seems good at first, but it is a long term thing. Like I think the NE coop made a poor location choice. I think they made a poor choice. OOO I shouldn't say that on tape. The egress is horrible. The signage is horrible. It was before the Lunds was built here. They had the opportunity to tap the whole market and they didn't take it. And they didn't take it because they are 26 blocks up the street. And then Lunds comes in and they lose sales.

All this new housing was going in, and it was a huge market. But it was a political reason. The neighborhood wanted it deep in the neighborhood. That was ok, but that had market costs to it. They missed a huge opportunity that could have been there. And someone else came in and took it- Lunds.

In the case of North Minneapolis, I think that the Bryn Mar neighborhood is a more affluent neighborhood. And they could be closer to downtown to access that market. You need to decide if you want to be deeper in the neighborhood for the real folks, or if you want to be somewhere that can be accessed by a lot of groups. You need to look at that as an economic question. Your sales are going to be much better where you have better economic strength.

You can cover a lot of other mistakes by having enough money come in the door. If you don't do something right, you have money that can fix that problem. But if you don't have that money, you have a really really big problem. The worst thing is doing a big project and then getting 80% of the sales you need. Because you have all the problems of a big project and none of the revenue to make it. And it is a horrible place to be. Grocery stores have a tiny little margin.

You gotta do it right. A lot of it is location- can you get in, and then presentation. Can you get in and can you get things. Parking is a big deal. Like the North Country Coop,

horrible egress. And because of that you walk in and you buy \$7 worth of stuff. But if they had parking you would go and buy \$40 worth of stuff.

How many times a day do people make that \$7 or \$40 decision? A lot. You need to make it easy. Get in, get out, get what you want. All the things that make me say that is where I want to go. They become convenience stores if they are like those coops. But if you really want to be deep in the neighborhood, you are going to be like a convenience store. There is not enough money to support the structure. That's why the guys with money are doing it like that. Why can you not get a big store in there? Partly because you are just not going to get the dollar that you are elsewhere.

IF you want to do more of a neighborhood convenience store kind of thing, then that is ok. But you have to do your numbers for that. You've got to figure out what you can provide people and what you cannot and do it that way.

The important thing with any business is that the equity shows up on your balance sheet. And that it is yours, the owner. And the more equity you have, the more loaners will be willing to give you. When foundations put money in, it sort of counts as equity. As a lender, I look at it as a little less good than member equity because someone from the outside gave it to you. While the member equity is saying I want this thing. There is a difference there, not a financial difference.

In my experience coops with one big donor have not been as successful. For example there was one that went under in Afton, MN, which is a fairly affluent little town. A lot of people wanted it there but didn't shop there. They gave their allegiance, but they didn't give their market revenue- they still went somewhere else.

Foundation stuff is fine. That demonstrates one level of commitment, but it doesn't demonstrate shopper commitment. And in a food store, I want shopper commitment. I want people going in there every week and spending money. I want the shoppers to tell me I am going to go there and spend money.

I wouldn't under value the fact that there is money in north Minneapolis. There is a middle class in North, and getting them to buy into that would be a good thing. Don't undervalue the community shares. I think selling shares to other community members or other coop members is important.

And foundations have typically not funded food coops. I mean they will look at it different in North Minneapolis because it is clearly an economic development project.

You don't want it to be a charity, it is a business. The more people you get to spend their food dollar there, the more successful you will be. You want the different kinds of support- the foundations because you don't want to have too much debt. But you have to have the sales support that goes with that.

I'd be really interested in looking at a market study. Get someone from the outside to do a study to figure out the best place to financially make it work. I wouldn't sell the neighborhood short. There are people. A lot of people in north Minneapolis care about north Minneapolis. You need to allow people to donate \$100 if they want. You need to make it easy for people to participate. You need to make it easy to say yes, hard to say no. Where ever someone is in their life, you need to say here is a way that you can participate. Don't be afraid to ask the people who have the money to fork it over. People from all other parts of the city with a lot of good will would do that. If it is presented in a way that they can appreciate it. Everyone wants a food coop. Don't be afraid to ask for help. The more specific you ask for help the easier it is for people to give it.

You need to see a gap and ask for it to be filled. I don't have that and then ask for it. People feel effective that their talents in a very specific way are contributing. And I am happy that if you get to some point with projections or reading something for you, I am happy. It is a hard thing that you guys are trying to do. But it is a key key thing.

That is a great way to look at it- there may be poor people up there, but they buy food every day. You need to make it a good opportunity. So that people have better decisions that they have now. You need to make it a positive thing- like that is so great that you came through the door. That is what I like about the coop model, it is such a citizenship model. I am part of the neighborhood so I am part of the deal and part of the club. These are great ideas to have, but if the business doesn't work, again this part won't work."

Brahm from People's Grocery:

"Year and a half ago, we decided to pursue the original programs and made structural changes. We received some funding and consulting from California Endowment. We got some business planning component. We worked with a company called Planned Resident here in SF. We worked with a marketing company called Change the Game, to sort of think about branding, etc. Consultants are always a mixed bag. It is hard to always hold them accountable because they are independent contractors to the organization. We had some satisfactory contractors, and some pretty mediocre. What is good about all of them is that they have a set of expertise that we do not have.

Organizations like us face a set of key barriers like pursuing larger scale ventures. One is expertise and the other is capital. If you have those two in line, you are moving quickly, which is why bigger organizations can really do that. So we were able to generate some support through capital and expertise that the consultants were able to provide. However, everything that a consultant does is done from a consultant language. They take things that you say to them and interpret it into their own speak. There is always a next step where the organization has to go back through the documents and customize them according to their own language. For this plan, I was given good draft docs I could work from and then I had to work through to reword according to what our org is up to. Consultants are good at providing the technical components, not the heart and sole of the story.

So we worked with them for a while and then continued on independently as an org with our business plan. We are now in the process of defining our company structure and our business structure. We, as an org, independently, wanted to offer a cooperative grocery store, member owned. For this we needed to generate some equity contribution into the business. And in order to do that we need outside investors, essentially. However, worker coops do not make good investments if someone is not a member. Here in CA there are some real legal limitations against that. The requirement for coops is one member, one vote. Most of the time that is a good principle to have, but in this case it does not attract external investors.

If I am an investor and have recently put 100,000 dollars into the company and a worker that has not even bought a share that recently go hired has the same level of decision power that I do, then there is an imbalance. A lot of people who have extensive experience with coops warned us against it because it can cause conflict between workers and investors. So we are not in the process of setting up an LLC. Because the structure of an LLC, if it is set up in the right way can very much function like a cooperative. You can create different classes of membership and decision making, like a worker/member class. And your operating agreement can define democratic decision making if that is the values that you have as an org. The flexibility is there. There is an org here in Oakland called wages. They are Women's Actions to Gain Self Sufficiency. They are a non profit to help gain for profit business- women run and mostly house cleaning. They are an LLC. They identify as worker owned and call themselves a cooperative. Well legally they are another entity.

I am now in the process of securing a lawyer for that, flushing out the agreements for that, define the classes and what decision making rights apply to each class. And then I am ready for fundraising. Once the business plan is in place, which it pretty much is. We are looking to raise 30% in equity and the other 70% in debt. Most parties are already there. The goal is to start in Sept and secure, ambitiously, all of the capital by next year. Secure the property by Spring and open by Fall of '08.

In a traditional coop all members have equal membership and ownership. The membership is exclusive to the classes that we create: there will be an investor member class, a worker member class and a management member class. Obviously the management and member classes will be defined by the people that work at the businesses.

Investors are recruited into the investment and become members if they decide to do so and then become members of the LLC. They are as the name implies. Their liability only extends as far as the investment, if the whole company were to default. However at the same time, their decision making is limited to extreme decisions- fundamental change in leadership or policy, renovation or dissolution. Other than that managers and workers will have the bulk of control of the actual daily operations of the business, and that will be based on the role in the organization.

Just in terms of store positioning, we are really working on building a store for inner city markets to develop a model for inner city markets. It is based on a small store format, shooting for a mid level price range in terms of the food sector, really emphasizing regional marketing as a key price strategy, working with regional farmers. Having a strong local foods component, a strong ethnic foods component and a nutrition education piece as well. This will be based on the competencies that the non profit has developed over the last 4 years. We will scale it up with the traffic that the grocery store will generate, and scale the programs we have going to reach more and more people.

We have a tentative location that we would like to have but of course capital has to come first before you can have location. But we have identified a 7200 s.f. building that is centrally based in the community. It has a 12,000 s.f. parking lot. It has to be a certain size. As mentioned with our micro enterprises, a certain size of business cannot support its cost. In particular in the grocery industry the primary indicator of success is revenue per square feet. That is the calculation that is used for projections and financial performance. If you can get a good sense in advance of what your projections will be, you can figure out how much square footage you need.

7200 s.f. is not large or not small. Parking is huge. Even in a community like this where a lot of people use public transit, in order to go grocery shopping people will often borrow a car. Being located on public transit passageways is key. The location we are looking at has public transit going to and from all directions. It is also located on a dense commuter corridor, which is essential to capture additional revenue beyond the immediate community. It is low income and some what limited in spending power.

And so if you can build a brand that can attract people from other communities base on the experience and the values you offer to them, you have more financial viability. However, spending power in low income communities is often miscalculated or is a real misnomer. While it is true they have lower income, they have greater density. In fact density can increase your spending power. There is a guy named Michael Porter from Harvard Business School that does a lot of work evaluating inner city markets or emerging markets in terms of the economic opportunities. How do you quantify that and make a business on that. An organization called the Initiative for Competative Inner Cities did a study in Chicago where they compared a low income inner city comuntiy with high density to a higher income low density suburban community. When you extrapolate the per capita income by revenue, they saw that the communities had about the same amount of spending power. It is not that the power is not there, it is just how we look at the communities is not necessarily accurate. I think this is why larger grocery stores do not site in this community, because they haven't done this assessment. When we look at density, we look a half mile out from the store, and up to 3 miles.

We have 53 liquor stores in this community. We have no grocery store. I have no problem with competition, especially with liquor stores. I hope that our store will put some pressure on the existing stores and incentivize for them to carry fresh produce. I think misconceptions about what this community wants will change.

We have a lot of different partners for a lot of different programs. For our nutrition ed, we have partnered with community orgs, centers and schools to work with children and teens. We have partnered with a church to do our cooking classes with adults. As far as community gardening, we don't own any of the land that we cultivate. Schools own some, West Oakland YMCA, another org called Spiral Gardens, and another is owned by the West Oakland Landtrust. The farm is run by an org called the Sustainable Ag Education Center. IT is owned by the public utility commission. They provide the land and a very affordable water rate.

There is some technical support around that in terms of farm know-how- Farm Link and CA Alliance for Small Farmers have been the most involved in developing our technical capacity and understanding of how to do this. We have a number of restaurants that are not only buying from us, but are also providing feedback on how our crops are and what they would prefer. They are customers, but also partners.

A lot of partners in terms of the grocery store. Inner City advisors is the most intimately involved there. They are an org that focuses on economic development for inner city areas. They work with small non and for profits that are looking to expand their businesses. WE also are going through the process with other organizations. Rainbow Grocery is our industry partner. For the development of the store they are providing expertise, training, for the store they will be providing several of their own worker owners as part of the interim management group. WE are working with the Azermine Bakery. They are a series of 5 coop bakeries and we are looking at their business model and training model, working with their worker owners.

Working with the National Center for Employment Ownership, WAGES, Twin Cooperatives Foundation out of UC Davis- a bunch of advisory, expert type people. The National Economic Development Law Center is helping us with some of the business planning around the LLC formation. The Volunteer Legal Services program is providing us with pro bono legal help. Kraft foods did pitch a partnership with us and we did decline that based on our own ideas of what sustainable ag and ethical business should look like. We didn't think Kraft matched our mission.

Other than that we have not shied away from larger companies as partners. WE have worked with larger companies in the organic industry, particularly Organic Valley, being the largest dairy coop in the nation. We have also worked with smaller food brands in the area -Delightful Foods, Revolution Foods, Whole Soy, a bunch of other companies like that. Most of them are looking for brand exposure, looking to expand into new markets, looking at our model as a way to provide exposure for them. Had a little bit of an interaction with Whole Foods, with the COO and President. We actually pitched to them about opening a subsidiary grocery store, they turned it down. They wanted to focus on their premium organic markets. But other than that we don't do a lot with corporations.

We have never changed policy. But, we had to deal with all of that (lots of permits) for our mobile market. Many of them are not hard to get. But the ones that had to do with mobile food vending are very constrained. There is a requirement that the opening of the

truck can only be 18" by 18" for sanitation, like for a taco truck. But for our purposes where we wanted people to be able to come into the truck and shop, that didn't work. But we just kind of worked it out. That particular permit was provided by HUD. And we just made some changes about how things had to be in airtight sealed containers, all produce had to be cycled out after a certain amount of time. All the rest of the foods were packaged. We weren't doing prepared foods. So he realized that we were different (the agent they sent) and our foods were not open, exposed and out. It wasn't the same issues. Of course we don't have all the permits for the grocery store."

Debbie Nelson, Cleveland Neighborhood Association:

"We don't have a grocery store north of Lowry right now. We had a supermarket at 44th and Humbolt. For years it was a SuperValue. And then they got bought by a Kowalskis. It closed then at least two years ago. It couldn't make it here. Nothing has come to take its place. Technically we go elsewhere for our groceries. They opened a Cub on Broadway. There is still a lot of negative perception about Broadway, so it is really hard to convince people to go all the way to Broadway to get their groceries.

Especially when you can go to Brooklyn Center in 5 minutes. I would rather go right out my door and ride my bike 5 blocks to get something. But it is not there yet. We are struggling with that. The other perception of North Minneapolis is that we are all poor here. And that don't put a grocery store there because they have no money. But there is money here, we just don't have anything to spend it on. Or go to Brooklyn Center to get our goods and services. There is a lot of leakage to the suburbs from our economies there.

We just don't have the goods and services here. Now hopefully that will change on Penn and Lowry. They are supposed to put an Aldis in there. But I don't really consider that a grocery store. It is just an upgraded convenience store. It's just a big convenience store.

When Kowalskis bought- they bought 5 SuperValue stores. 4 were over south, and one was up here. They intended to close it immediately, but they were convinced by our city council member to give it a try. But it was never the same quality of store as the south Minneapolis store. But it was two three steps above the Supervalu that had been there. There are two schools of thought- one was the group of people like my in-laws who don't go anywhere to shop unless they have a coupon. They won't pay 10 more cents for a can of beans even if it is local. They will still spend gas on driving somewhere to get the deal. You have that group of people who didn't shop at Kowalskis who thought it was too expensive.

They could have shopped there, they had the money. They just wouldn't. Then there was the other group of people who was younger and had the expendable income. Shopped there for a while and then decided that Kowalskis was snubbing us. Because the store was not as nice and didn't have the same quality of stuff as the south Minneapolis stores. There was also the fact that the store had issues with shop lifting and that kind of thing. That was not something that they were prepared or wanted to deal with. So eventually they just closed the store. But I have noticed since then that they closed their store in Eden Prairie. So I don't feel too bad...

You organize with you is willing to be organized. There is a lot of up-cry about the fact that we don't have a grocery store. There is some talk of a food coop. But people don't understand the nature of a food coop. Someone else does not do it. People ask why don't you have a food coop here? It is not how a food coop works. If you want a food coop here, then have one. Don't expect anyone else to bring it to you.

There is a growing interest in gardening and an interest in growing their own vegetables. We have been trying to get a community garden here (at L. Laney School). But it is nearly impossible. Not because people do not want it, but because the school district does not want you on their property. Years ago it used to be if the city had a vacant property, the community could have a garden there. But they don't do that anymore. They want to build buildings, they want tax base. Which is hard in North Minneapolis because we have limited greenspace and when there is a vacant lot, they are putting up a house as fast as you can turn around. They were. Now that we have all these vacant houses they are not putting up as many houses. I don't actively organize around the food issue, but it comes up from the residents that have the issue.

A good location for a coop- there is a string of shops on 42nd and Thomas that just opened up, with two or three vacant ones. It is an issue because the council person doesn't like the landlord. So we won't go there. Ideally it would have been where the Kowalskis store was, but that has been sold to a developer who has got it all cut up into different parcels. It's got a nice big parking lot. That would have been the ideal spot.

You got to start small. There is any number of store fronts up and down Penn. I think the city wants those gone and push all the commercial into nodes vs. corridors. That is all auto-centric. So I don't know if that will happen. There is any number of vacant store fronts in N. Minneapolis. They have a Cub down there and we have a Cub up here. I think it needs to be centrally located. But maybe we need to have two. I don't know about Penn and Lowry, with the Aldis going in if that makes sense. Cleveland has big plans for this corner- there might be space for a food coop there. ”

Elizabeth Archer of the Wedge Co-op:

“There is also the issue of why the stores have left- which I assume has to do with crime, or perception of crime, or low margins, lack of support from the neighborhood. I imagine it is a combination. And just because it is neighborhood owned- doesn't mean they are immune. Just because that is so and so's father's uncle's mother's store does not mean people will be nice to them. When people are supporting criminal activity or a drug habit, they probably won't care. Their need is very immediate...”

HA! Starting a coop in North Minneapolis! I started working for the Wedge in '81. They got started in '73 when I was away at college. I tell you the '70s and the now- there were a lot of college students, etc hanging around edges of society. We still had housewives; remember that phenomena? We had an economy where people could live on not very much. The houses around here had been chopped up into many many low rent

apartments. This was very much a marginal neighborhood. The sort of neighborhood that my mother would lock the doors in. She worked at the Art Institute since I was eight and she would call the police on the boys in the park and no one would show up. So it was a very marginal neighborhood. A lot of baby boomers fresh out of college could rent cheap apartments over here.

And a lot of housewives or retirees that didn't need to work were around, and college students all played a role. And the interest in natural foods. Sort of a product of the social ferment of the '60s and '70s. There were a lot of ways people were doing it all over the cities- sitting on committees for 6 months, sourcing product from warehouses, volunteers, finding warehouses that would deal with natural foods coops. For a lot of years we were on COD status because they didn't trust the cooperative enterprise. People were also willing to shop in a basement apartment, and that is what it the Wedge originally was. It is a hair place now- extension generation.

People were willing to shop for their bulk flour in new plastic trash cans. You would go to your local hardware store, because we didn't have Menards and HomeDepot back then. And we would buy those 30 gallon trash cans. 5 gallon tahini or pickle buckets from McDonalds were the first things that people would pour the cornmeal into. And people were willing to do that. The needs to pay the workforce were pretty minimal. We had two people called coordinators that worked 4 hours each and I was told at the end of their shift they would open the register and pull a 10 spot out of it. There was a bookkeeper and they didn't do payroll for a while. Being at an intersection and not having much room inside they would put the produce outside on the sidewalk and people would learn about it that way. Not much advertising was being done. It was pretty much a neighborhood thing and people that would drive by Franklin and see it would go WOW.

In the coop movement the coops that grew were the ones that were easiest to get to. And the Wedge was one of those, next to the freeway. Some were on two one way streets. Some were over by the U which it is virtually impossible to drive to. It was very much a neighborhood based movement. It was mostly volunteer- and there was at first a self appointed board of directors. People of course were not volunteering exactly because they were being rewarded for it. You would sweep, empty buckets, stocking... But I am telling you this for a reason.

Now though I don't think people want to do that anymore. Most people are working- and if they are home it is usually for a reason. They are on disability. The Northside has a lot of people. If they are not working two or three jobs, they may be collecting unemployment. And frankly the working member thing is not technically legal, what we were doing. If we were in any other business, these working memberships would not be ok. The programs have to be structured in such a way that they are not a substitute for paid labor- anticompetitive and what not. But if you are not open to the public, there is a way around that.

IF you are only selling food to members, and you have to work to be a member, and every member pays the same price, then the labor offsets pay. Then you only need a few

people paid to manage that labor. Park Slope Coop in Brooklyn runs that way. But it is a closed coop. They have a waiting list. Working is part of the deal. You don't get a discount, just working is part of the deal. You get to shop there. Running it like that- a buying group- is a possibility. It is a retail establishment, it is just members only.

Other buying groups are just a preorder club. But then again it is an issue of someone being home and having time to place the order, receive the order and then call everyone when their orders arrive. Here are your canned goods. Now as a rule, natural food shoppers, want a nice grocery store. We have raised the bar over the past 35 years providing that. I don't know what people would think about a church basement or a community center basement. I don't know. But maybe as a first step, if they saw it was a building block.

The old model is dried beans in a basement. That is what we all started with. There were coops all over the place; Northside, north east, s- park, one and two, Capital City, one at Loring Park, east Calhoun, Powderhorn. A bunch of churches took a wash on the Loring Park one, we couldn't figure out why. And all are closed down for the most part. And all for different reasons- some for political reason, some for bad management. Here at the Wedge we had good access and a group of buyers that was just excited. I mean I would come home from college in the '70s and we were just getting into good coffee. Many of us had gone away to college, gone abroad, and tasted real coffee. Italy and France and them coming back here to Folgers land- this horrible canned thing. Whole coffee beans- the Wedge offered them. We would bike over from Dinkytown, I wasn't aware of them in our southeast coop. The Wedge had buyers that wanted to bring in new things.

The Wedge stuck around for so many years because of social cohesion, people stuck around for many years, it wasn't outsiders coming in and saying let's do this. I mean coops were springing up like mushrooms after rain. They were in every neighborhood but the ones that lasted had strong cohesive community group, and a decent location that was easy to get to. We didn't even have parking. We had Lyndale, the freeways, and Hennepin, so access, strong core commitment and we were not a political coop. There certainly were people who were political. People were trying to make it a working class, workers coop. We were all as a rule against the war, racism and corporate daddies. There were things we all agreed on.

As a whole we didn't practice food policing. When some members would say that we should get rid of white sugar or white flour, other buyers would say they are Italian and they are not getting their pasta at another store. Hey I am an adult, I know what I am buying. I am not part of this store to not be able to get what they want. People were saying no sugar, but I read the guidelines and it said no bulk sugar, so I bought it in boxes. Everyone was mad at me but they bought their sugar. That's when I realized that stated ideals and behavior- there is a big line.

Like people were thinking that honey Hagendaz was the only icecream that we should carry. But it collected frost. And people went right across the street to the super America and bought chocolate chip. Finally it had gone on too long and the Hagendaz guy came

in and I said gimme one row of each of your best sellers. He was practically shaking- don't you need to talk to you collective? I am strong- will keep this. Everyone was furious with me but they then bought the icecream. They wanted wholewheat cookies that sunk in your stomach.

The bakery was complaining that they were taking a bath on these cookies that no one will buy, but every survey says buy righteous cookies. No sugar, no white flour, no chocolate. We do offer white flour- just not bleached. We try and minimize the processing so for what it is, it is the cleanest and most wholesome product we can offer. You gotta trust the grown ups. I mean a grown up knows when they are reaching for a cookie or some icecream. It's that there was sugar in the ketchup, sugar in the bread, sugar in the soup and in the cereal. Sugar was being sold in these products at a much higher price than it being sold by itself. People were thinking these products were their daily sustenance. I think that the integrity, the honesty of a product is most important.

There is nothing to say parents can't serve icecream and cake at a birthday party. So we still have people that try it. Comments trickle up and we say yes we know... and the shelves are stocked with all sorts of alternative non-hydrogenated spreads. But members own this business and there are certain products they expect to get or they will take all of their shopping elsewhere. We offer education and we offer alternatives and we stand back and let other people make their own decisions.

You have to cover your costs. The biggest cost, besides buying the food itself, is labor. If you are gonna offer low prices and livable wages, you are never going to stay open. That is what happened to the Kingsfield group. You should find Craig Cox. He is the Minneapolis observer publisher. He was involved in the Kingsfield neighborhood group, and it never got off the ground. They were promising low prices, living wages. We all just shook our heads because grocery business is the lowest margin. If someone drops a jar of mayonnaise, you have just lost your entire profit for that whole case.

You need an experienced grocer running your store. The places that survived did it by learning real business principles. And the places that went out of business run on ideology. Like you have to understand the concept of a margin. So like if next week someone raises the whole sale price by a dime, you do not just raise the retail price by a dime. You have to charge 12 or 13 cents. For every product you sell, you cannot just charge the price of that product, you need to yield more to cover the cost of that sale. That is a principle that ideologues don't always grasp. It isn't just a penny for a penny. You have to cover labor. Every golf pencil that we have down there for people to jot prices on bag, every apron has to be laundered, every rug, every bag, as well as property taxes, and water... we have to pay for it all.

You know that when you eat out the way they determine the pricing is cost of ingredients times four. You know how many restaurants fail? There are very few companies that routinely open successful restaurants. The costs of running a coop are the same as running a grocery store. You have to think in those terms. Don't think because you are a coop you are safe. You have to understand margins. You have to hire people out of

grocery. Frankly the wedge, it was the location, the rarity of the product that kept us going, as we learned business skills.

WE had some visionaries on our staff and board, but the whole point of a coop is to provide a service, not at a cut rate. People think it is a coop so I should get a discount. Ok, so do you want to pay your staff minimum wage then? Is health care important to you? The patronage refund, that is gravy. You don't join a coop for the patronage refund. Don't expect one for five to ten years. Unless you have a racket of management who can minimize loss right out of the shoot.

I don't just mean someone that was bulk buyer at a coop. Our manager right now who has been here for 2 and a half years now, has spend 25 plus years running a coop. She worked her way up from cashier. First off she had a business school background. And then she took every class on grocery store management that was offered in professional training. She worked in wholesale. She can hold her own in any conversation with anyone in the retail wholesale business discussing anything; loss control, distribution networks- those are all things you have to know about. She came here on purpose- she wanted to learn the organic and natural food side of the grocery business. She wanted to get out of corporate. She liked the idea that instead of just giving lip service to your customers, you really want to serve them here. Here the shareholders and the customers are one and the same. She is a quick study. She was also attracted by the fact that she looked at our books for years and said these people know what they are doing. This is the organic store she wanted to go to. Success attracts success.

A coop reflects the needs of its own memberships. I don't know if North Minneapolis is asking for a mix of gourmet imported items, or organic locally grown foods. I don't know what your members want. A coop could be an appliance store, or a sporting goods store. What a coop in North Minneapolis would be will be determined by what the people that are shopping there want to buy. You don't decide what you are going to offer. It has got to be internal and organic. A coop is not a missionary activity. A missionary can go in and teach people the coop principles- this is how you run a coop, this is what you have to know. But unless they have ownership in that community, but they are also looking forward to finally being able to walk down the block and get what they need.

When people tell you that you should be opening the Wedge or a natural foods store in North Minneapolis, it is like how arrogant. We weren't set up by people from Edina where people came into this marginal neighborhood and decided they need x, y, z. First off, no one believed that natural foods would catch on. They thought it was something that the kids were doing- they would outgrow it. They never thought it would be a big deal.

Packaged food really started in the '50s. This whole post war infrastructure had been started to deliver prepackaged food to soldiers and sailors. There was home time conversion- and magazines were full of info telling women how to cook. It made my mother very uneasy, even though it was promoted a lot. There was a long list of chemicals in the foods. Egg yolks didn't quite break the same. Industrialization of food

in the postwar period really took off. By the '60s there were books about advertising, some about food additives that started coming out. This was all happening into the '70s when the economy got skewed so that you needed two incomes. We started in 1973, Northcountry in 1972. The groundwork had already been laid.

All through the '80s the chant was, organic is just a fad. This won't go any where. But then our membership grew. I had neighbors at that time say who is interested in coops any more?

My advice about buying locally is that you need to talk to our warehouse. Coop partners warehouse which we run as a wholesaler, does exactly that. And talk to our produce manager, Dean Schl----. Because we also still buy directly from some farmers right at the store. Our warehouse sources this stuff from farmers all over the region. The network is already set up. You don't have to do the groundwork. You have to get some credit and get a store open and start ordering from coop partners. We will bring the food to you. If there are individual farmers that you want to connect with, that is fine. Talk to our produce manager and to managers at the Seward Coop because they do that, they have been doing that for years.

Coop Partners Warehouse is part of the Wedge. It is a wholesaler that serves 6 states. Any coop that wants to buy from us, high end restaurants that want to buy organic or local food, and independent grocery stores in WI, MN, MI, IA. We deliver perishables. Lori deals with the local growers. You don't have to start from scratch. The best advice is to tap into the resources that already exist. There is also Mill City Farmers Market downtown. They are only in their second season. But they may have more farmers that need outlets, who don't produce enough to get to our warehouse level. Café Brenda helped start that up, she could give you the names of them.

Other resources- CDS, which I am on the board of. I sent the info to a woman with an African name with a University name. It wasn't Chingwell. Is she working with you? She worked here. We taught her about coops. Boy she has taken it off. The consultants are in town- Bill Guessner lives here. He travels all over the country to consult; he is a business development consultant. There is a program by them called Food Coops 500 that is exactly about this- starting food coops. Stewart Reid is in charge of that.

Let me tell you there are people in this country that are eagerly running around setting up coops that then fail 6 months later. Ideology does not run a business. You have to have a trifecta- of business knowledge, and a solid consumer base. You cannot define a coop by what you will not carry. If your members consider themselves activists, you still cannot do this. We would never carry that, we have principles. We just told you that you are not very principled and that we don't want your business.

I have an old friend who once stood in front of all of our paper products, like 7th Generation, and proudly said that the coop she belonged to would never carry that stuff. But she had a cart full of it. I love to support them, she said, for what I can get. And I wondered if she was still smoking dope. And meanwhile that coop on the other side of

town is always wobbling. They are too principled to go in with other coops to get the better deals. Their customers have to buy things at full price while the rest of the coops get to sell them at a deal. How is that too principled. Ideology will not save you.

Also, excessive academic involvement will not help you. I am a pro education person, and I want my son to go to grad school. But if he goes to grad school in economics, it does not qualify him to go to open a grocery store. People who want to argue about the ideas of a thing vs. people who want to open a store every day with cash registers that work and orange juice on the shelf, and isles clean enough that people do not get grossed out at the thought of buying food there. ... that is important. Cleanliness is number 1 in grocery stores. If it is dirty and smells, I don't care how good the food is inside. People are not going to want it. If you have a surly staff that acts like they are doing you a favor- no one is going to want to shop there a second time. And let me tell you we overcame all of that to get a corner on the market.

Now natural foods are everywhere. But you could have a corner on the market by just having a grocery store. But if people are unhappy with what you have they will get on a bus and go to their old place."

Kevin at CDS:

"The toughest nut to crack are urban coop models in low income neighborhoods. I picture 3-4 different food coop models. Situations that are distinct enough. One store that we worked with was Just Food in Northfield- rural community, highly educated, above average income, because of the colleges. And that coop, we helped them get started and they did well. The well educated rural model.

We worked with a community of 1000 that lost their grocery store. Rural, primarily white, some distance to their nearest alternative, so there is some urgency to their situation. We are working with communities like Medford, OR. Not a small community, and they have several alternatives, but want a natural foods store.

We also have a lot of convenience stores in rural US that are actually owned by the ag coops, like Senex which is the one we see in the upper Midwest. There are others. The question in my mind is there an opportunity to transition the convenience stores into places that offer greater nutrition and greater food choice. And is there a way of playing with that model on a systemic basis to address the needs of very small rural places.

The issues of dealing with an urban model that is low economic with conventional foods ain't been done anywhere. It is worthy of being done. Several of my consultants have a passion for saying that this model could work. The investment is more in the loyalty than in the cash. There is need for cash. You have to have a business model that works. If folks view it as them not me, you cannot make it work. You have enough buying power to make it work. If you are successful and Supervalu or Target comes in and plants a store, those folks need to know why they started that store and stay loyal to it. Because if

you sell out your own coop for a nickel on toilet paper, you've got no chance of making this thing work.

So, it is the most challenging model, but I think it can be done. It requires greater due diligence, it requires greater levels of social organization in the community than most other places. You have no room for not getting it right.

A basic definition of a coop is a business that is owned by the people that shop there. If people do not shop there it is fundamentally flawed, it is a bad business. That model cannot work. It loses all its power when you lose the intention of folks choosing to shop there. When you severage that you lose the power of the model. You are better off just letting some corporation come in and take their chances in a losing their shirts. Because then at least you are not extracting greater equity out of the community. But if you are going to build a community owned enterprise, the community is going to invest its equity there. And invest equity with the intention that that equity will stay and build. If that is not the model, and you are doing it as a place to hang out or have coffee, then there is no power in that. That is a fundamental question that the community needs to figure out. Do we have enough folks who will make this their primary shopping place, doesn't have to be their only shopping place. And do we have enough products, a product mix that we can offer at a price, at a total cost of shopping better than their other options.

You might not find it only in the product. You might need to say that I have to get on a bus and it takes me 1.5 hours to get to and from the store. And it costs me bus fare and time, plus the cost of the food. On the other hand if I can walk or catch a ride to a shop down the street, I might do that, even if the price might be more. Because the total cost of shopping is better. Or there is some other intangible that this is an economically superior option. Then you have a business model. It is that kind of assessment that needs to go into the formation of the NFP if they think they are going to have a store.

There is a model for starting food coops that we wrote and revised in conjunction with those national partners. It has been tested in theory and now it is being tested on the ground in the 16 communities. Frankly we haven't seen much change in the model. The concept of the model works. It is built on 4 corner stones and has three stages. The 4 corner stones are talent, capital, systems and vision all get applied in each stage. Predevelopment, feasibility and business planning, and implementation are the three stages. At the end of your implementation stage, that is where you actually open your doors. Predevelopment- vision is key- what are we trying to create here. You need talent in the form of the steering committee and in the form of staff or dedicated leaders of that process, paid or unpaid, but there needs to be leadership. Predevelopment is getting that initial vision down and community organizing.

Business planning is getting all the metrics to test that vision, to determine whether that vision as stated is feasible and under what conditions. And if it is not feasible, you have to go back to predevelopment and figure out something people will buy into. Where the disciplines of doing that are well known; the market analysis, the pro-forma feasibility planning are not rocket science. But the trick is once you have developed your business

plan, you are going to have to go out into the community and you are going to have to get investments. And you have to figure out- this is what it is going to cost us. 200 bucks a person to buy our share of stock. We are going to have to get capital somewhere. How many people are going to be willing to invest- who want this thing so badly that they will create it. That is where that interplay comes out of- will this work. And if it doesn't, then you walk away.

And you say we are not going to put our equity in, we will put it in our pockets and keep shopping at Cub. The reason to do it in stages and in this manner is that it minimizes your investment cost, it minimizes the cost of failure. You are doing it in a sequential way that bides down the risk of the next failure. Market study and pro-forma are both key early critical steps. Community meetings are important, and they continue through all the stages. As you go through the process they get deeper and deeper. So that you are building your base of understanding, and engagement, seeding your seed bed for investment. And if no one is interested... you cut your losses and say that this community doesn't want it bad enough.

We cannot drop into the community and be an authentic part from the inside. What we can do is surround the local community organizers with access to info. Give them good process to follow, help them connect with other communities that have maybe had some similar experiences so that they find info faster. But we cannot short circuit what is that community's fundamental organizing process.

The way I describe it in my world: you have a diverse community, in the ag world, you have the guys who hang out in the coffee shop and before they roll the dice to see who pays for coffee that morning, someone says we have to figure out how to work on the price of said commodity. They bitch about it until someone says lets do something. At that point in time, you go out and create a steering committee. You have varying levels; some deep commitment some passing interest. At an important time when someone says lets do something, you form a steering committee. I call them your dream team. These are people who are known and credible and have integrity in this community. Who are people who have special skills, insight, knowledge? Do we have a retired grocer? Do we have someone who knows the foundation community? They all have to be credible and known and respected. All of this is building toward a certain point in time.

The steering committees job is not to start the business, but to hold in trust the idea of the business for the eventual owners. Their responsibility is to develop the best possible business plan that they can to bring forth the best idea. Inside of that you need at least one champion- with a fire in the belly. They need to make sure the steering committee is rigorous, stays on schedule, stuff gets done, and meeting. I have sometimes seen two champions. I have seen people play the role of champion at different times.

They embark on two strands of activity. One is the organizing effort- community organization and communication. It might be a website, it might be community meetings, it might be posters and fliers with a phone number to call if you are interested. It is a process that takes place to keep these folks involved, not saying daily, but weekly or

monthly. Not randomly. That process- speaking the church groups, speaking to the rotary. You are constantly trying to build awareness of the project. That is the job of the steering committee.

As you move into the feasibility study, sometimes you start a pre one- is this even doable- are we crazy? If it is something you really want to do, move into the formal feasibility study. It is supposed to identify the range of conditions under which something is doable. Sometimes there are two or three, but sometimes only one. And if there is none, then you hit the first go/no go decision. You look around the table and you look each other in the eye and say – are we in or out? Have a specific talk about that. Typically a feasibility study is done by outside or third parties. The terms and the shaping and the conditions of the study are shaped back here in this process. Typically it is done by a third party. Eventually you will be needing to go out and show people the numbers and it is important to have an outsider run those figures so that when you sell the idea, people will not think you are drinking your own whiskey.

And bankers will almost always require a third party, so figure out the resources to do it right. Once you do the feasibility study, you have the go/ no go points again. After you figure out under the feasibility study which set of conditions works, then you set up a business plan. You say this is the set of conditions we are choosing under which to operate this business. You had multiple possibilities and then you focus on one. Typically the business plan is done by the steering committee along with third party experts. The best business planning is done between the steering committee and the consultants. There needs to be a discussion about why we are going to choose a vs b, why we are going to do it that way; because they need to have that level of knowledge.

Shipping in a business plan from a consultant will not work. After the business plan comes back, the steering committee has another go/ no go conversation. The next step is the capitalization, your membership drive. All throughout this process here you have been keeping the broader community engaged through an email or hard copy newsletter or through community meetings. You have been building for that equity drive. That is why the integrity of the steering committee is so critical because those folks who have gone through the planning process are going to stand in front of their friends and neighbors and have a come to Jesus conversation. We need money and a lot of it. And this is why it is going to be a good investment and this is why you should make an investment. It is not a contribution, it is an investment. If you don't do a good job of picking members of the dream team, people are going to be sitting back in those chairs listening to the pitch and saying I will have nothing to do with him or her. I wouldn't invest a penny in what they do.

The credibility is important. You need people to be saying, if he says it, then I trust it will be ok, that it is an investment. That credibility drives your chance of success. It is all driving to that point- you have a concept and this growing awareness of the community coming together in an investment conversation. The equity drive is itself a go/no go conversation. Here is the required amount of equity and debt you need to finance this thing.

If you don't get enough equity you pack it in. You did not do enough of a good job convincing your community. But if you did reach your minimums and that is when you have owners. You can turn to your steering committee and say job well done and thank them. They are released. And you celebrate because they put up with a lot of crap. The owners will now, some of the steering committee will say they are not in on it, set a board. The board will describe for the community what kinds of goods the store will provide for the community. Good food fairly priced, good food competitively priced, whatever that vision is. That was incubated and refined in previous phases. The board will deliver to the owners. The board will hire a CEO to set up a corporation to deliver the goods.

What are the challenges of this system? Look at the greater community and decide if it is something they would like to have happen. Every thriving business has reason to exist. I don't mean that people need food. Ideally they eat good stuff. God forbid that we prefer dining to consuming. Does the community want it bad enough?

Another challenge is do you have your dream team? Do the community dynamics get in the way of finding that dream team? When it comes down to that equity drive and people think someone is a shark, then you have shot yourself in the foot. That is not unique to the N. Side, but I know it is present there.

Go back to my initial perceptions of the small grocery stores that I met with- they were not holding any cooperative ideals in trust for the future owners. They were holding it in trust for themselves running the org with other peoples' money.

I think you have some assets- because of Angela's work at NCDF, she has some knowledge and connections in the coop community. In terms of organizing, you certainly have an asset with Angela. I don't know Bernadette. You are certainly living in the most coop rich part of the country and there are some assets there.

I would say however, that I have not seen this group or this community engage in a really good process, a business process. I am telling you this is the way it is. I have not seen active folks stepping up to the table and saying that how can we get good at processing this model. Maybe the time is not ripe yet. But there needs to be a commitment to good business development concept. I have a feeling that it is mostly stuck in predevelopment. Finding people that can assist them in driving the process forward is a necessary component. And I just haven't seen it yet.

I think it will also be a challenge to figure out where they will be able to get equity. Coos do well where there is a track record of social orgs working. Maybe it is in the churches, maybe it is in the other community orgs. There is a lot of chaos that rips at trust.

University of MN with their engagement in this process could be an asset, could be a demerit. I am a product of the UMN. There are times when I look at my alma mater and think there is hubris in that org that prevents it from living out its landgrant heritage, and

that bothers me. The academy is a wonderful place, but the academy is not built for being a business development institution. And the things that are important to the academy and those that make their living inside of that. They do not make their own success by running a successful business. I have seen them engage in other situations where they do not add to the urgency. They bring more weight than these fragile ventures can sustain. The U needs to be thoughtful about how they choose to engage with this process. One example would be – I know there has been some talk about a specific location for the food store. That could be a huge success depending on many things- is there good parking, is there access to public transit, is it a place people are near? Can you unload trucks?? And and and.... If not, that predetermined site will detract from the business. It may be a good project location or office, but it may not be a good grocery store.

That is where bringing in third party knowledgeable consultants- not people who teach business. The ones who teach are not necessarily good for doing business. Making this a project for a grad student is bad karma. Making this a business that you are actually going to build equity for the community – you don't want to trust that to some one that has never done that before. You can find cheap resources and you think that will fill your needs. But that is bad karma.

What would be better? There are places for engagement, but on the big issues, follow the lead of the people who know what they are doing- who make their livelihood off it.

We have about 30 people that work inside CDS. 20 something consultants and 7 staff. Most of those consultants are food coop consultants. Most of them are from the food coop industry. WE are passionate about figuring out how to make this model work. One of the biggest assets of the coop model is coming together to figure out challenges. Some of our strongest entities have happened because people came together when they were getting screwed. A common enemy and cooperation was the tools they could use. They used that power in the face of someone that was screwing them.

Whether it is farmers in N. Dakota. N. Dakota is rock red republican, but they have a state bank. They also have a state grain mill. Where did that come from? That whole idea of leveraging cooperation- the N. Side is as good a place as any that I know to do this. If this challenge should be taken on, it should be taken on the N. Side. IT is the best place I can think of- the best crucible. You have access to a rich coop community, you have a genuine social need, you have a social investment climate in MN that can support that. But none of that means anything if the community is not willing to help itself. If the community is willing to say that this could provide jobs for our kids, but only if they give the customers a good shopping experience. It is a bad place if they don't want to work. And we won't subsidize that.

Or if kids or whoever wants to steal grocery carts, you tell them they cannot do it in our store. If they want to graffiti the store, you say you don't know want them to do that in our store. Do it somewhere else. That is what it is going to take. The community needs

to look at the issues about why other businesses don't want to do business there. They need to look eye to eye.

Last words- if I could wave my magic wand, finding the dream team needs to happen. If it hasn't happened and you cannot find them, then put this idea down. Don't keep tempting people with it. There is a time when it is ok to shoot the project- put it down. I would also try to find 100 grand. Not counting the cost of the org if you have staff. But the external costs of consulting for the due diligence is going to cost 100 grand. That is money you will pay to someone else to do a good job. What the staff and communication costs are, someone else needs to figure out.

It can be staged, if you get to the feasibility study and you are going to need money, go find your sugar daddy to raise 100 thousand. Commit yourself to getting steeped in the process. Find a network of other orgs that are working on this for support and get yourself a store within two years. Or find out it cannot be done and quit bugging yourself about it and let it go away."

Mustafa

"So there has also been talk of building on this spot here. The U building the family development center. The Y will be here. North Point Human Services, Child Probation Services. This will be a new building. That building across the street, they will go up. There will be parking in a ramp and a bridge that will cross Penn Ave, so that will be awesome. We'll see. They have said so many different things.

I am sure once it gets going, building membership will not be a problem. We did listening sessions all across N. Minneapolis about a year ago. One of the questions we posed to people was do you have food resources in N. Minneapolis. THE answer was no. WE need coops and things better than the corner stores that are here."

Chris at McKinley Neighborhood:

"We don't have a food coop in the community. Why? All that takes is a group of people at the grassroots level, pooling their resources and starting a business that is part of a community. Why don't we have investment clubs in north Minneapolis to help people save to help end institutional poverty. Or people can take that money and create investment pools and buying up the housing stock that is foreclosed. Other people are doing, it but why don't we do it. I think we think we are not good enough. It is that beat down dog theory... I was on the neighborhood organization at the time. We were really getting into the idea- what else could we do. I am a member of coop in South Minneapolis. I would rather not have to drive 7 miles to get there, even though I love it.

I told the Chair at the time, Anna Devorack, about it, and she said that is funny cuz I am talking to another group that wants to get a food coop going in the old site of Jerry's Flowers at 34th and Lyndale. I said cool. She said she would be talking to them. Bernadette was there and Beverly Propes and I can't remember who else. They were talking about what it would take to buy Jerrys and get a coop going. Anna, our board chair was going to those meetings. It was mostly people from Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church and a few others. And so was our vice chair, Barbara Kennedy. The

discussion started changing and that group stopped talking about Jerry's because of building issues. And all of a sudden it changed into north side food project, as a broader based food group. But with the idea that a broader based food store network would evolve. I heard about it a long time ago.

The Jerry's food Coop Project committee- myself and our chair and vice chair all sat on that. Which I think the NFP sprung out of. Then Angela came on. I met her, our chair met her. We talked about food issues, frustrations in food issues. The largest way were involved is with the farmers market up here in the neighborhood. Bernadette about a year ago, did a think with the U about food issues. Barabara Kennedy went to it and recruited some neighbors for it.

And people like to eat.... Frankly, I love my coop but it is mostly a tool of educated people, and frankly white people. So how do we change that? How do we bring it into communities of color. I think having a farmers market is great. There is the Oakland model, where they use a truck to drive around the neighborhood to sell the food.

The image thing- when you see food coop, you think of guys in tie-dyed shirts. Artists asking when the next organic kiwi is coming in. It is part of that, but it is way more than that. It is showing fair-trade. Food coops can support a lot more people in the community.

Because we have a garden, which can be linked to food, that comes up in our conversation quite a bit. When 10 % of your homes are vacant, and there are homicides going on around the corner, food kind of slips down the totem pole. The garden helps connect to the farmers market though. Talking about a coop is good; gets chatter going about food.

We are part of this group called the Northside Neighborhood Alliance. They paid someone to do a comprehensive scan of the Northside. We looked at what businesses are here, and what could be here- and be supported. The one that we in the community need to answer as fast as possible is sales leakage (a horrible word). We in the community don't spend enough money in our neighborhoods. Then it is the chicken and the egg. Is it that we don't have enough business or do people not want to shop in the neighborhood?

In the heart of the neighborhood we have three convenience stores that sell no fresh produce, with the exception of a banana. They sell a lot of packaged and processed goods like packaged hotdogs. And they sell a lot of candy and pop. We have a sign shop, a little fixit place, and a burger king down by the river and that is it. How do I shop at any of those places. I could take my car to the guy down the street.

I don't want to support the convenience stores. A: they do not employ anyone from the community and they do not live in the community. I don't mean to sound overly provincial by not shopping at them. Plus they don't sell any product I really want. I would rather go to cub. They at least give back to the community. They employ people from the community, they at least have fresh produce. Although I don't always agree

with everything cub does. I want them to stay here. Without them, we are totally run by a convenience store living. Where you pay 5 bucks for a peach they don't even sell.

Marketing task force does this sales scan. We identified that we need to stop this sales leakage. People north of our neighborhood go out to Brooklyn Park to shop. People are leaving to shop. We cannot get any good stores to employ people.

How do we do that? There has been some talk of getting a Burlington coat factory because it will go along well with a cub as a department store type place. We also need a family restaurant, like an Embers or an I-Hop. I am talking about Broadway; to turn it into a commercial corridor. I can't say that a Burlington Coat Factory is going to make me go down to Broadway.

I have a bunch of people in the neighborhood that grumble that we don't have a coffee shop. Not every neighborhood needs a coffee shop. There are three in all of North Minneapolis. Is it cultural? Black people, white people, Asian people, all like to drink coffee. Maybe an Asian pallet would prefer tea. Usually these coffee shops serve handmade food, serve locally made baked goods and local food growers. It is not crap thrown off of a heating belt in a fast food joint.

WE have two cafés, soon to be a third, in all of North Minneapolis. I ask people if they shop at the ones we do have and they don't. But they say if we had one in the neighborhood they would. I know that North Minneapolis does not talk with its dollars.

There is a study done in Oakland that tried to calculate its real per-capita income for a diverse/low income community. A lot of people work under the table in these communities. When Oakland did this study, they realized they had more money than they thought they did. Marketing looks at these numbers and demographics. They will wait until they get the right demographics and then says move there. No one does that to North Minneapolis. How cruel can you be, no matter how diverse, socially economically developed don't want nice parks, nice stores.

I know that a lot of people in our neighborhood don't have access to transportation- some are elderly, or disabled, or just don't have the money. So one thing we try and do is, but don't do as good as we should, is we need to provide transportation. That is what I liked about the Oakland thing- is that it comes to the people. I think it needs to come to the people.

If the coop cannot be a mobile one, or if people did pool resources to get a brick and mortar coop going (which I think would be hard). Then we should get one of those 15 passenger vans, slap our logo on it, and drive around and pick people up. No matter what the gas charge is, what the maintenance charge is.

It is nothing new, but should be done. Every time something like that is brought up, people say it is expensive to run a van. We used to have a youth program. It was expensive to run. I couldn't understand why the neighborhood didn't buy a van to help

get the kids around. They said well it's expensive. I can understand that. I have two cars, and the old one is a money pit.

It is different for a neighborhood org, we are a non-profit. But a coop is a business, and transportation should be built into the bottom line. ”

Barb Grossman of the UMN Urban Extension:

“The testing of the waters, the concept of a coop, is an educational effort. My experience with coops, other than being a member of a coop, is in the housing area. Trying to get people to understand buying a share, is tough. We were trying to get people to see it as a way to stabilize housing. I know from that experience that it is a very hard concept to sell. In getting the message, it is important not to assume that people want a coop if one is not there. If what people want and need can be matched up with what a coop can provide, then I think there is a good marriage there. Would a food coop be the only way that food access can be achieved? I know that there is high volume and a very slim business margin. In my own coop, I have seen the struggles over the years. It is now in a very good place. We have a second coop in a community that is a little more thriving than north Minneapolis. I have watched it over the years and think it has really become part of the community. I see people from the community being employed there. I also see that the food choices have changed over the years. There were concessions made. I saw regular Dutch potato chips. I was horrified when I saw that, but it is a way to connect to the tastes of the neighborhood. Even there is more food that is prepared. It has brought some credibility. It takes an investment and years for it to pay off. But whether there is a will and desire and commitment, I don't know on the Northside. This is the questions that need to be asked.

Allowing people to experience it a little bit, is a good way to start it. First show what people can buy. Do it like a truck farmer. Do it in a parking lot, and show the stuff. They kinds of things that are available. I think for people to experience things is better than the theoretical. There are all these grocery stores that give free samples. That is another way. I think particularly in this neighborhood, working through the existing institutions. Where people believe what other people say. Take advantage of the existing social networks. If you build it, I don't believe that they will just come.

I think being where people are, physically, is how we have operated. Going to schools where we have had relationships. One thing that we found, which has also been researched, it takes considerable effort to make behavioral change. In order for us to get reimbursement, we need to have 6 hours of contact time. It takes this amount of time to start to make behavioral change.

Maybe another marketing thing could be cooking together. Right now at the mall they have got these things where you can cook a number of meals at once. And it is a social activity. That may work in the communities where people do things socially and communally. It could be that having free food, or food for less is a draw. Having demonstrations, so that people can learn how to prepare things better. If we are talking

about adult learning, we need to think about how adults learn best- that is with their hands.

There is a program in Cleveland called city fresh. And extension is involved, but it is many orgs. It is CSA but only having to pay one week at a time. Instead of paying for something that you don't have the money for, or that you cannot see that far in the future. This project picks up food from farmers and distributes it to markets and parking lots around the city. It is produce, and they include recipes. If it is zucchini, they teach you how to make a snack and a meal. It seems to have worked.

I think that multigenerational cooking would work. Especially in the immigrant communities where you do not have all of the aunts and uncles and grandparents around anymore, but you can get people from other houses to serve as mentors or models of behavior.

If that particular family relies on lard, then that is where we could do a little intervention to show them alternatives. Simply good eating has something called the manipulator. I don't know what it does, but it shows what a pound of fat looks like in your body. Here is what the sugar in a soda looks like..... they are very hands on.

I think also having people deliver the sessions who are know and respected in the community. Cultural leaders, will have a little more credibility attached to it.

I think a message around a food coop, if there is interest, after some leg work, is going to be the hardest to craft. There may be some really good simple words that have been crafted in the coop movement. For example, I was running this resources center. We were putting together a community center, computer lab in Frog Town. We were making a neon sign. We professionals had our ideas about what it should be called, "community resource center... but then we decided to test some words out on people coming in. We ended up calling it Job Search Center. There was some great wisdom in tapping into the thinking of people. Maybe it is not food coop- maybe it is neighborhood foods or homestyle foods. I think that there is some magic in the words, in how you speak about it."

Maggie Ademek of the Sugar Project/UMN:

"And that is where all the people in this neighborhood that go to buy their food. There is a low cross grocery right across the city limit. My selfish answer would be to put a coop at the old Kowalski's site. It is 5 minutes from my house. And it is right next to senior housing and on a bus line. And the question is do you have to go with an existing building?

Penn/ Lowry would be great, because it is half way in the N. Side. They have been trying to resuscitate that corner. There have been three or four hair salons in this huge now empty building. That would be a great intersection. It is on a few different bus-lines. It is not that far from the Near North, it is not that far from us. It is close to a post office.

I would be all for talking at the food summit. I am going to have to think about the coop steering committee- because I am on the board of another organization and am starting a new job. I will try and think of other local people that may good for that.

One of the challenges with this food thing. There are some things I like about living here, and sometimes not. Most of the time it is just that it takes me so long to get to work. But except for the few years when the Kowalskis was here, I have to drive ½ an hour to get good organic, local food. I was able to get organic milk and meat when Kowalskis was here. I went here, I spent my money in the neighborhood. One of my greatest pet peaves about living here is that there are no great restaurants. I mean it is a little better than it was 6 or 7 years ago. You have to travel to go to a decent restaurant or to get decent food.”

Allan Malkis, Northway Community Trust:

“I had heard on and off that there was an effort to start a food coop on the N. Side. And then got some calls or some emails from Angela and she explained what the project was about and they submitted a proposal to get an investment from Northway Community Trust. Our investment committee decided that that specific investment was not something that the committee was interested in, because it was an investment in a research coop. And we would be more interested in investing in the actual setting up of a coop than the research arm of it.

We did attend the conference that was held here on food issues and food access. I have been on the mailing list and gotten updates from Angela on the work they are doing.

I haven't been tracking, but knew what the work plan was as of a few years ago. And it seems that they are sticking with their workplan. It sounds like they are going along in the direction that they planned to go. We did get a study done that was sponsored by Northway and The Northside Neighborhood Alliance to look at retail opportunities for commercial and retail development on the Northside. Their opinion was that the success of Cub Foods was extremely important to the Northside because it is such a large business and its fate might be watched by potential investors. They were concerned that putting in a food coop might harm Cub's long term chances for survival and that it may harm the economic well being of the community. That is the other point of view that suggests that it might not be a great idea to have a food coop.

We are still in a process of discussing the recommendations in the report. We have not adopted anything as a policy and are still considering the opinions.

Even with Aldis opening up, it is not a full line grocery store. There is certainly a need for more stores. But I think it goes back to the question of can they develop a community membership base. And people need to realize that this is an investment that is not going to bring them a huge dividend. It is not a wealth creation tool in terms of getting cash in people's hands every year. It is a wealth creation tool in the sense that it is an asset that will be owned and run by them. But there is a Northeast coop that is not that far away.

Again, it is hard to get there on public transportation, so it may not serve this community. But it is not that far away as coops go.

And then the question is can you support two coops that close to each other? In the 70s they did. There were lots of coops close to each other that did well. That lasted and then there was consolidation, and now there are only a few left. Well, Seward and Northcountry are really close to each other. What you have got is that people in those neighborhoods grew up with coops and are committed to them.

In N. Minneapolis there was a coop. It closed. There is not a base. There would have to be a lot of work building up the base. That is the make or break issue. And you have to figure out how you are going to compete with the convenience stores. By their name, people go there because they are convenient. How are you going to make it a more attractive destination than Aldi's or Cub? The vision for the area around Cub is that it is not just a place you go to go shopping but that there will be lots of other retail there. Go to Cub and then next door there will be a hardware store and a department store. You will have lots of destinations in one geographic area. How do you compete with that?

If that does in fact happen; which is not guaranteed. How do you compete with that as a smaller one stop shop. You have to think about another retail node. That is why I think North on Lyndale. That might be a good place, but it is hard to get to if you live south of Broadway. Cub is going to be a lot closer.

The NFP in my impression is an effort to get people to have access to healthier food and to have more control over the foods that are made available to them to eat. I have been involved in food coops since the early 70s. I have worked at them and been on the board. I know about the coop system and have been very supportive of it. So I understand what a food coop is and like the idea of a locally owned economic entity. I think food coops are a great idea. I think for a food coop to be successful, there has to be a motivated and educated base of consumers. And you have to make it something people are going to invest in with scarce resources.

I don't know enough about the NFP's work to know if I think that they have been successful at starting to build that base of potential owners. I think having a coop in general is a great thing."

Forming a Board

Several questions were asked about forming a board to several of the interview participants. The questions included:

- What makes a strong board?
- What skills are important to have in board members?
- What role does your board play and what role has it played at different points in time?
- Who do you think would be a good board member for NFP?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of forming a board?

There was some advice for the NFP regarding potential board members. In general, it seems important to have board members that are able to dedicate time and energy. For example, while high profile board members seem like they would provide visibility in political and social realms, well known people are often over committed and may be more effective as allies. Most of the interviewees told the story of their board formation, and most agreed that the role of a board shifts through time.

Brahm from People's Grocery:

“Well our board is relatively new as well. We just became an independent non profit last august. Our board is only about a year and a half old. At this point some people have left the first board and we are in a recruitment process for members. We learned a lot the first time around in terms of how to identify and recruit the right kind of board members. Initially we didn't have a lot of criteria. We felt we needed someone that knew about youth development, someone who knew about food production, someone that knew about real estate and financing. We found people that fit those roles.

The other criteria we did not look at was availability. A lot of challenges we had with our first board was attendance. But the 3rd or 4th meeting most of the people were not showing up. We initially had 10 members. We didn't look at whether they could actually be a board member. WE also didn't look at how much experience they had in being on a board. A lot of those people in the first time around had never been on a board before, or had very little experience. That was hard because no one really knew what a board should look like, how it should operate, what the systems are you should put in place, what are the procedures. We depended on a lot on two of the older members who had been involved with non profits for many decades, been on many boards and had been chairmen and EDs of orgs.

A lot of the criteria we have been looking at now is what is their experience with boards, what other leadership positions might be relevant to that. Also, what is their profile. If they are a really high profile individual, you cannot expect a lot from them, including attending the meetings. So you have to make a decision, are you looking for name recognition and the kind of credibility that can provide. Are you actually looking for people that can be hands on and get things done. The first time around we were looking for both, and this time around we will be looking more for people that can be hands on.

We are still in the stage of where our board is developing. I would say the board is not yet in a place where they are providing a real substantial contribution or level of leadership. It seems pretty common consensus that it takes three years for a board to really synergize, and establish themselves separate from the ED and org leadership. That has largely been my role over the past year and a half; pushing the board, reminding the board, and doing a lot of things that I shouldn't be doing. I am a staff member but not a board member. I am often in a position of making an agenda and taking notes and that kind of thing. Which frankly at the end of the day, the board should be doing those things. We are still not clear what role they play (fundraising or programming). I am trying not to dictate what they do, so that they have a sense of agency. Obviously I would like fundraising to be a core component. The long term goal is that they are a policy governance board and does strategic planning at a large scale and fundraising at a large scale. They are not supposed to manage daily operations. Of course they are not now. There is a very clear separation between staff responsibility and the board. “

Deanna Cummings of Juxtaposition Arts:

Juxta has done everything over time as we just did it. We started out with a fiscal agent for the first years. Realized we could only get certain funders to fund us because not everyone will fund you through a fiscal agent. If we wanted to be eligible for bigger pots of money and to do program all year, we decided we needed our own board. That was our reason. I don't know if anyone would tell us it is a good reason. But that was our reason. Well we need a board. First we needed to get our 501 c 3 status. How do you do that? You need your articles of incorporation, you need a board of directors, and bylaws. The board piece was a result of the 501 c 3 status. We didn't know how that was structured. WE had an attorney friend help us with some off the shelf bylaws and just subbed Juxtaposition Arts in it. That was 12 years ago and we were young and naive. But it worked though.

We asked all of our friends and relatives and all the people we knew would say yes. I was also on the board because I was a volunteer at that point. We had like 25 or 30 people. That was way too many people. I was running the meetings and it was kind of hap hazard from meeting to meeting in terms of what we were going to talk about.

After about a year of the huge board, some people naturally went on their way. Everyone was maternal and paternal with helping these kids out with their idea. It shrunk to about 10 and then to about 7. Doug was one of our founding board, and then Kim Ellison came shortly after. They were just very supportive. If I were going to give anyone advice about forming a board, I would say go with people that support the vision of the founders. They would have some ideas from here and there, mostly from a programmatic side of things, or why are you doing things that way?

They supported our vision and that is exactly what we needed. We needed the paper work that said we had a board and the board met every month. We kept the board up to speed as to what the plan was and this is where the finances were. So that board was a supportive board in helping us get our legs under us in order to be able to grow. They got the word out, made financial contributions- there were times that we would need a loan to

get through the tough times. And also supporting our vision verbally and being cheerleaders for us as founders and for whatever we were wanting to do. For the most part the board was telling us to go for it. Not recklessly. Had we proposed something that was unethical, they would have nipped it in the bud.

The second phase of our board's life, the first phase being from 1995-2001, it shifted. That first phase, I was the managing director. I lead the board; I lead meetings, created the agenda, kept the minutes. I was volunteer and occasionally I would get a stipend with grant writing. I didn't come on full time until 2002. We were all contractual basis at first. Roger and Payton came on as staff in 1999. The second phase of our board started in 2000-2001. It was around the facilities question.

At that point we had been around for 5 or 6 years and we had grown a lot, slowly. But the organization budget size in 2000 compared to 1995 was pretty significant growth. It was one thing when we were a \$5000 organization serving 15 kids and then the next year we were a \$15000 org serving 30 kids, and the next year it was \$30,000. And then \$50,000, and then \$80,000. And we were at about 100 kids. And we stayed at below \$100,000 for sometime. But the number of kids was multiplying. It went from 100 to 200 and up. So, we had the organizational growth. It was necessary for the board to start playing a different role. Not just to rubber stamp anything and everything, but to actually have a role in creating a vision for the organization.

So we went through a strategic planning session with an outside consultant in what I think was first 1998. And then the second process in 2001. So, the board became aware, and there were new people coming on. And we were more sophisticated at that point- that the board should be representative of the community at large and should be shaping the strategic goals of the organization, helping with the fundraising, holding staff accountable. And doing a review process of the staff. As opposed to the first board which was just there on paper and didn't have too many of their own ideas.

That major change happened as our budget grew and as we started thinking about buying some property. And we realized, and the board realized that oh- this is a real thing we are talking about here. And then the board became much more active as an over-sight entity, that was saying we think this is a good idea, and this isn't. And my role shifted- the board took over the responsibilities for the board; agenda setting, minutes. And I shifted in the way that boards should work. The board is my boss, so my thinking and interacting shifted. At the same time they were still supportive and believed in us, but they were more of an over sight board. That was 2000-2006.

And now today, we are transitioning from this early board, which was still very much a family board. They were there because they support Juxta, they support us. So now our board is a more seasoned community board. All of our founding board members have resigned. Doug was the last to go and was the president for 10 years. All of the current board members have been on the board less than 3 years, and the newest is a month. WE just added a board member.

And when we add board members- I should say that when you read about boards, they should be a self contained entity that oversees the operations. it is frowned on if the E.D. has a hand in guiding or shaping the board. But I think that it is a very tough role for any non-profit to reach. I would like to meet those people who do that. Maybe for a very large organization. But even then, the ED has to have a huge say, or influence on the growth and development of the board. They have to work together as partners. When people recruit board members from recruiting firms, I can't believe people do that because it would seem to cause misunderstanding between the people recruited and Juxta. People would come to serve on our board because they work at Target and want to do the community some good. I am interested in people coming to sit on the board that know our organization, and at least are intrigued by the org. And that they have something that can help the org move in the direction that we are wanting to move.

For our current members, first and foremost, do they know Juxta and are they passionate about the kind of work that Juxta does. And second are they affiliated with the N. Side? Do they work on the N. Side or do they have some passionate connection to do work on the N. Side? And finally do they have a skill that is needed or that there is a gap in terms of our leadership. Or they bring a skill in line with where we are going in our future. For example, one board member right now is the director of a housing agency because of our real estate acquisition and activities. NO one on our board or staff was involved in real estate at all, so we wanted to bring that skill set onto the table.

Our latest board member, his name is Bill Slab, he is an elementary school teacher at Ellie Stone Johnson, on the N. Side. He is an artist as well. We always feel it is important to have artists on our board, in addition to the sort of corporate. For obvious reasons, he brings his education background also. He is also an African Am man, and we feel that is important because we want our board to reflect the community and the audience that we serve. Another board member runs a program at the Walker. The Walker has been a long term partner of Juxta, since before we were an official org. Wit brings a knowledge of how things work in a bigger arts institution, which could be of help to us in the long run. But then also, runs the Walker teen program. As we are expanding our campus, we are also expanding our programming. We have to have some new stuff happening in the new space. So people that have some knowledge of education, like Bill Slac, the teacher.

We have an investment banker. His financial background is helpful. That is a weakness on the staff, that is not my strong point. And as our finances have gotten more and more complex, with the facilities and the grants and some loans, and some short loans and some longer term loans, mortgages. Since we opened up our new building in 2004, our budget was at \$100,000 when we opened up. Today, it is about \$350,000. It has tripled in three years. And gotten intricately more complex. That is our operating budget, that is not even mentioning the million dollars of capital money that has come in and out of the org in the last few years. That was all totally foreign to me before. So we needed someone that was connected to money and with money who can contribute, but also who can help us become more knowledgeable about our finances- tracking, billing, taxes.

He has only been on the board for a year, so he hasn't fulfilled it all yet. But he will. Part of that is me as the ED giving up control. I want people to come to help, but then nobody can do it like me. And what if they don't understand or get it wrong. So part of it is also retraining myself. Like I wanna take a class about delegation. I have been thinking about that more and more in terms of leadership. Organizations that are in the 12-15 year age group that are bumping up to the next stage. We are there over the next several years. When the founder is still involved and growing it, I would guess that the ability to give up control, to delegate is hard. I think I do a good job of involving other people. But I think in terms of the day to day work of running the organization, I haven't done as good of a job as I want to at some point. I think it is really critical, it can make or break an organization. I think that if a director does not figure out a way to let go of the reins and share some with someone, they will burn out. They can also burn everyone else out around them.

It could just end up being bad. And you hear of boards of nonprofits having a coup and firing the director or the artistic director. I think it happens. The Green Institute had something like that. No knowing when to let go. And having antagonistic boards that don't know them very well. And maybe that had to do with not having the wisest choices of who you have on the board. The fact that I am aware of and interested in it, will serve Juxta in the long run. You have to learn it. It doesn't come naturally to hand off leadership. I cannot see what else in the world I would do and care about...."

Kirsten Saylor of Gardenworks:

"Back when we first started in October, we needed to get our steering committee together. I know we needed a group of people providing input. We were thinking that we needed all these political people. But in retrospect, all we needed to do is get their ears about it. We didn't need that, we needed people invested in community gardens; to provide some kind of barrier. The ones who really love community gardens need to be on the committee. Then as politicians come around, they can be invited on it.

We have some people on there now who, like Gail Dorfman and her aid. She is truly busy. Really it would be enough to know that she likes community gardens and then we will call her. That's really all we needed to do.

It did give us some credence, but we have been working under the wire. We are not trying to be in the lime light we are just trying to get the attention that we need and get gardeners together.

That was one thing about my work in DC, we were really a grassroots thing. The bigwigs would come in and we didn't have any momentum. They would come in and talk and we would be all excited, and they wouldn't understand the impact they had, even though they were just coming to check us out.

I am not into this top level stuff. If we are not working for them then what is the point. Now I have the chair of the board from the green institute on my steering committee. Or maybe get them on the green institute board.

My board has been pretty hands off, they are not trying to micro manage. I'd like to see it change, but at this point I don't want to see it change. I can barely keep up with my own functioning, if I had to report to someone there would be a lot of education that would have to happen. We did have a woman that did have a lot of knowledge about community gardens on the board, but she is not there anymore. And then we did have a guy that made community gardens an icky subject for a lot of people. He put a bad name. it's politics. We are coming down from that but there is so much more we can do.

We are waiting to get passed this period of flux. In our last grant, the one that we are currently under. We are supposed to be spinning off. But part of me does not want to. It is just not cost effective. If we can work the bad out, then I think we are good.

And we feel like we haven't had a lot of conflicts with grant writing, with the green institute. There is always going to be a struggle. I thought we were going to be asked to spin off last year, but then we weren't. But it still has some bugs. I would love some help on this, like a consultant. I am feeling isolated."

Tom Guettler of Farm in the City:

"The history of the organization- it started 10-12 years ago. It was a group of parents that got together and wanted something for their kids to do during the summer, beyond the babysitting. It was really driven by the founder of the organization who is still the chair of the board. This person has carried the vision of the organization/. She was always in a place to devote full time to this organization. A couple of years ago her financial situation changed and she took a full time job. And they hired an ED but the problem was and still is that organizationally the board is not prepared to take ownership of that vision. The vision is still held by that founder. It is real typical of founders of orgs. The vision is still her, even though she does not have the ability to put the time into the organization that it needs.

Even as board chair she is strapped for time. They hired a full time ED two years ago that did not work out. They did not know about the dynamics. The board sees it as a need to develop an infrastructure. It is easy to do that. It is hard to figure out what the role of the staff is. You go to one of our board meetings and it is all about operations. You go to one of our board meetings and it is all about operations. The organization has relied a lot on volunteers.

The board members have been friends of the founder. She has provided resources. It has been like a family. It has been done out of her house. They have used her car. It has been a very comfortable situation for everybody. At the same time, the board was understanding that the org was not going to grow that way. The founder was also understanding. They want to be more organizational mature. They don't know how to do it. To have them really take that responsibility, they are not ready to do that.

IT is like governance. What is the role of the board. The founder is still the chair. She does not understand that, she is still too close. I can see that as an ED, because I have

experience as a board developer, a board recruiter. It is not appropriate for an ED to take that role with the board, to say this is what you need to do.

I know what this board needs to do to become empowered. IN time the board chair and founder needs to understand that she needs to make a transition away. I am not going to tell them how they should do it. It needs to be a partnership. They need to come up with a plan to figure out how this can happen. After two months, I am figuring this out. IT is an issue of coming up with more than policies and procedures. These policy and procedures are not critical to the organizational existence. We need to work on bigger issues. Unless we can get this figured out...

The board wants me to do fundraising, I cannot just go out and do fundraising. I need the context of a strategic plan. The whole board needs to be absolutely committed to this. I can help in the development of this. But I need to have the work that I do be driven by this (strategic plan). Cannot just go to a funder and say this is why you should give us money because I need to be able to tell them why. How we are benefiting the community.

There are a lot of opportunities. I need to tell the board this, that we need to focus on some. We need to pick what we are going to focus on and figure out what the public benefit is. Not the benefit to the kids who have money. But to the greater community.

If we are all about arts, that is a different scene. They are different than providing help to community gardens.

A strong board is one that thinks strategically. The way it looks is different depending on the life stage of the organization. Considering the fact that you sit at a board meeting and 90% of the time they are talking about policies. They have been a working board for so long that that is all they know. What they really need to be doing is thinking strategically. They need to develop policies- we need a personnel policy for example. When I say thinking strategically, they need to know where do they think they are going to be in 5-10 years. And they need to know how they want to get there. What is that picture? Paint me that picture of the better world that we want to achieve through this. What steps do we need to get there?

Interestingly they just went through that process. They just spent a bunch of money hiring a consulting group to go through that process. Community consulting group was the firm they used. There are a few different partners. The problem is that the firm didn't have the board the tough questions. Now how does that impact the work you need to do as a board? You say you want to make this a more legitimate organization, now how do you do this? You say you want to institutionalize this, or depersonalize it. What does that look like? How are you gonna get there? What does that mean in a meeting? How are you going to deal with your founder? They didn't do that. They talked about, they have a vision statement. The thing is that a lot of this work was done with task forces. And I don't think the whole board ever got together and endorsed all of this.

I have all of these planning documents that the board did with these consultants, but the whole board never endorsed it. When I joined there were 10 people. When I came on two people resigned because they were burned out. They said, well this is our time to leave. Now we have someone to deal with this stuff. We do have some board members that are definitely able to deal with this stuff. But they may not have the same vision as the founder. They are not clones of her. I think the founder would love to have someone who carried the same vision and passion as she does, to carry on the good work that she sees needs to be done.

It is never going to happen. You need someone that can believe in the mission. But the way the work will get done could look totally different. I don't think it will. But it could. The way the world is now, looks totally different than it did 10 years ago. We need to be able to adapt. The board needs to go at all times, why? And what if? Always. My job is to get something done as the ED. Their job is to ask the questions.

My job at MAP, I would ask EDs what do you want from your board. A lot of EDs feel like the boards take up too much of their time.

In terms of what I would want out of my board, it is in context of the life stage of the organization. And what I want from them is to be able to deal with the hard issue. Number one, a willingness to sit down with me. What is the issue that no body wants to talk about? Tom, what keeps you awake at night? The board has to know this. They need to ask this question in different ways. Another one for me is, how people talk about the role of the board as a fundraiser. I need the board to go into the community for me and help make those contacts. They need to say tom you should be talking to this person. That is one thing. They do not have to ask for money. They need to say, this person would offer some help. Once they figure out the vision.

Another one is, its own perpetuation. The board needs to be thinking about its own succession. Not just of the board, but succession period. What happens if? Are their systems in place that would allow the organization to keep going on if something happened to anyone in the org- to me or to the founder?

Because we are a small organization. I think that the size of our board is fine. For me, I am assuming that all of our board members are going to show up. I know some people only think that 60-70 percent of the members will show up. That is why people think they need bigger boards. My thinking is that the work of the board needs to be interesting enough- that it needs to be challenging enough for people to feel like they have to come and want to come. I don't want them to ask, what good does it do if I show up? I want to establish a need for them. If that is the case and they feel they have work to do, I think 7, 8, 9 people is enough. For this size organization that is enough. We are about a \$170 thousand org, (optimistic).

Advice for the NFP: the board needs a job description, just like I need a job description. You need descriptions of the officers of the board. I would make a matrix. What do we want from the board. And based on that, what do we expect the board to do for this org

at this point in time? What skills are we looking for to fit this matrix? You need to be intentional about what you need from people? Are they going to be a working board? What does the organization need at this time?

That is what I mean by a matrix. I would have that be a standing effort. I think the board should always be looking for people to be potential board members. Not necessarily the people doing the work. There is a difference in the people doing the work and a savvy leader. Because you are familiar with the enterprise, doesn't mean you are going to be an effective board member. At MAP I did board recruitment. The most common answer, was I am ready for this. I know how to do the work, but now I want to stretch myself and take on this leadership role. What does this mean? I think people have this idea of what it means to be on a board, which is mission based. I think it is what is holding the whole nonprofit sector back. They are so focused on the mission, that they do not understand best practices. They are so focused on the program of the org, but that has nothing to do with the work of the board.

I would give them training. To have a board development plan. The board needs a development plan. You don't just know this stuff. I was involved with MAP and they have good board trainings. The important thing is that the board takes their role very seriously. There is nothing new. Everyone has done this. You need to care enough to be disciplined and to be intentional. On an ongoing basis, do the development it takes to do the work for a good governance.

To reiterate, when we talk about boards. I think it is really important that when board members join, they are trustees. They are trustees of the public, not of the stake holders. People get that the stakeholders are important, but even bigger than that. They need to understand that the public owns us. It is important for the board to think that big. It is important to understand the role of a trustee."

Gretchen Musicant of the City of Minneapolis:

"The board: I imagine there are financial issues. I noticed that IATP and Youth Farm have strong connections to chefs, that are organic and locally based. They have champion, activist chefs. And I think that it brings in cache if you want to have fundraisers with fab food. And the network of people connected to each other in the high end restaurant world. I think that organizations like "Way to Grow", whose office is on the N-side. They recently built a board- were governmental. They built a board with business savvy. In the past they had people that were knowledgeable about early childhood. They had a content based board, but now they have people that are asking the question of how do we make this a successful nonprofit. This can be a risk, because you need to have strong organizational folks that can keep the mission going. Because you have these other people that are not as passionate about the mission.

And I would think that if the NFP is going to do the coop they should have some n side people on the board. I think it was the chef from Lushia's that was with Youth Farm. The chef from heartland is connected to IATP. Brendas would be a good place to go- at

least they are on the north side of downtown. Other board contacts- not in government, because they can be a conflict of interest. You can put legislators on the boards.”

Barb Grossman of UMN Extension:

“I have sat on several non profit boards. And have worked with a number of non profit boards. The purpose of the board needs to be very clear. Boards can be formed for all sorts of things- for fundraising, for spreading an idea, for being representative of the neighbors. The clarity of what is the purpose of the particular board needs to be there. It can shift over time. One thing the board should not be is hands on in the day to day of the business. That is not a role a board should play.

Because this is an entity that it is in its infancy. Maybe at first it should be promotion. Should be talking about it at a variety of levels in the community. On the grassroots, at the commercial level, governmental level, and foundations. The size of the board, depends. I was at one place where there were 50 people on the board, I think that is not necessary. I think the work of the board can be enhanced by an advisory committee or task force. A lot of people are happy to spend a little bit of time thinking out loud and making a phone call. But not everyone wants to get roped into a long term thing. With advisors you do not have to have the board know everything. Off hand, I could see the board having some of the skills I just mentioned.

Maybe financing and fundraising. Certainly people who have connections with food providers. Something about food; maybe someone who has had a successful history with operating a grocery store, or connections to farmers. It also makes sense to map out what are the contributions that people need to make to get this going. To lay it out about what needs to happen. I think there may not need to be a preconception that they are a food coop. Does that have to be an operating principle?

There should be some principles and values that are developed by the board to become operational. Here is how we do our work. These are guidelines. Maybe it has to do with the sense of ethics and integrity that members are expected to have, and that the organizations would have to reflect in its work.

Maybe the board would need a mission statement. Not so elusive. But not too narrow. It needs to be focused. Is the food coop a goal that people think needs to be achieved. But is there an openness to how food security can be satisfied. I would caution against, depending upon the mission, maybe you want an odd number of board numbers. 9-13 to start out with and no more than 25. because then it starts to get really unmanageable.”

Allan Malkis of Northway Community Trust:

The board: “There is a community board mostly of people who live and work in the community. I think there are 17 right now that runs Northway Community Trust. That board has an investment community that reviews the letters of intent and requests for investment that come in. That is members of the board- a subset of the board. We are a 501c3, and this community board is our board of directors.

Our guidelines are that we want a board that is both geographically representative but also culturally representative of the Northside. We have European Am members, African Am members, Asian Am members, and we had two African members, but they have left the board. We have people from different neighborhoods. We have people that work in N. Minneapolis but live in another neighborhood, and are connected to the community that way. And I think one of the strengths is that it is a community based board. There are people who are very concerned and involved in that community. There have been some very specific things. You want to have people on the board who understand legal issues, who understand fundraising. Maybe there are some specific talents we are looking for on the board that we don't have yet. We just did a board recruitment last Winter and Spring and added 3 new members. We will be adding more members late this year or early next year.

I think the board is strong in being representative of the community. There are some people on the board who put together the original Northway Plan and they have that sense of the history of the organization and they have that commitment that other people get. The board is very supportive of the mission of the organization. When we select people we have a process for interviewing people, criteria that they use to select people. We have had more people apply to be on the board than we have seats available. So it is not like... there are some organizations that need people and will take anybody. And it has been great that we have more interest in the board than we have slots. We had a nominating committee that talked to all the nominees and looked at all the applications and decided who were the strongest candidates.

In conclusion, I have been on a lot of boards. It is very important for boards to be strong, to have strong leadership. Whoever is putting the board together, needs to be intentional about getting strong leaders- and who really get what the org. is about and be can communicate that. It is also important for the board to not let the staff lead the organization and have the board there just to rubber stamp. I had worked for an organization where the director had been there for 12 years, and he decided he was going to retire. He gave a year's notice. And even after a year, they were not used to running things and they didn't get their act together to hire a replacement. And within two years, the organization was gone. The board was not decisive enough while they had the time.

If I go to a board meeting and the staff are doing all the talking, I am worried. They staff says we know all the details, that is why we are doing all the talking. The board will have no ownership. I am now the president of a board of a non-profit, and I am trying very hard to make sure that the board takes responsibility for lots of things. I am on the board for Alliance for Metropolitan Responsibility. It is related to Smart Growth. When you are making decisions about development, you need to consider the environmental and racial impacts. ”

Chingmay, independent consultant:

“At this point it could be a governing board. They are not at the place where they can just have a policy board. I mean dealing with the big picture. I am not sure an

operational board makes sense, just based on a few conversations. Not sure where they are at exactly, but they are formed as an organization.

That board should help them go in the direction they need to go. That board could be involved in fundraising- which all boards should be part of. But also the board can put in place the policies and procedures. I am talking about the financial systems. Not hiring an firing. They already have staff. But I am looking that the board could help them define the culture. What do they stand for. How do we want to treat our clients, our participants, our community. It is best to have these policies. Maybe they already have that. I am looking at a board that can build that infrastructure. So that when they start to grow fast they will have all of that in place.

There is a developmental board and governing board. They developmental is not micromanaging the director or staff, but is still hands on. They need to understand x, y, and z. It is going to be a coop where you generate income selling produce. You need someone with a financial background who has the necessary skills. You need people who have the skills and can put in place the infrastructure.

I would say definitely go right ahead and form your own board. It is about ownership. You do not want the executive director to get burned out. You need a board in place. Forming an org is sweat equity. You believe in the vision and mission. But if you bring in other people they can help you move your vision forward. It can help you bounce your ideas off other people. Sometimes we get caught up in what you are doing.

Do not build a very large board. You need to target the people you need to help you get the work done. People that can motivate and inspire you to action. When you do the internal assessment, you will identify what skills you are lacking. Maybe we need someone who is really well connected to the foundations. Doing the internal assessment will help you figure out who needs to be on your board. (there is no set list of people or types of people that should be on a board).

Maybe you need someone who is well respected and connected in the community so that when they speak they are providing an opinion directly from the community. Maybe you need someone that can knows how to run a coop.”